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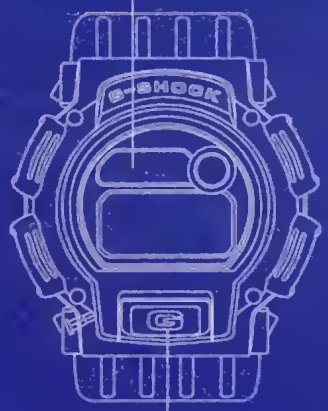
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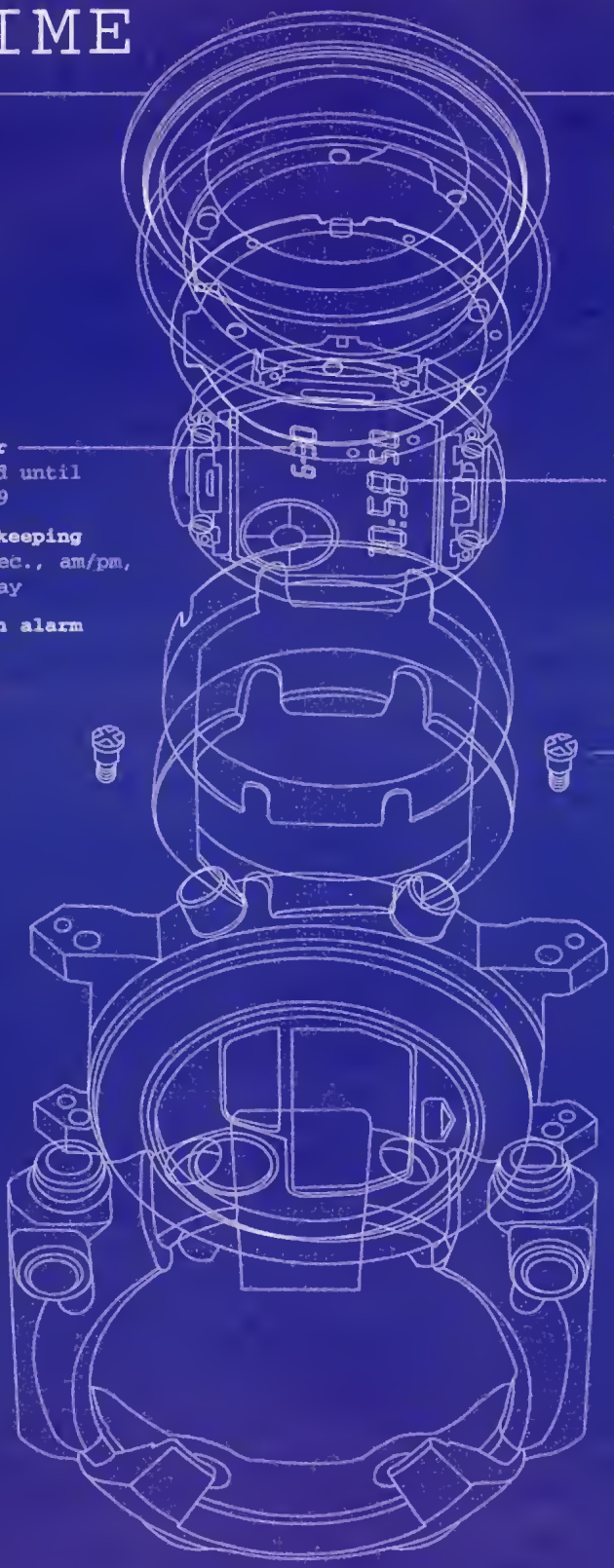
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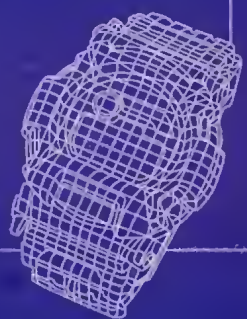
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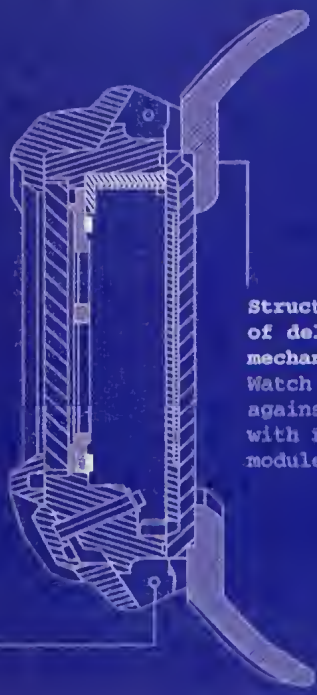


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This photograph of Oasis's Liam Gallagher and cover by Miles Aldridge.

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Black and blue: Sweet 75's Yva Las Vegas. Photograph by Marcelo Krasilcic.

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SPIN

Letter From the Editor

You'll notice a few changes this month. One change you may not notice is that SPIN is now under new management, making this the first issue in the magazine's 12-year history that founder Bob Guccione, Jr., has not both edited and published. Under Guccione's ministrations, SPIN grew from a 'tude-packing start-up into what is widely recognized as the best music magazine in the country. But magazines, like sharks, need to keep moving. So, in the coming months SPIN will undergo a series of changes both stylistic and substantial, including a top-to-bottom redesign and aggressive new coverage of film, tech, books, politics, ideas, style, and consumerism. Music coverage has been reorganized and expanded to give space for more reviews and reportage. And you can continue to count on SPIN to chart the splintered but still hugely vital world of rock'n'roll (and its progeny) with scene reports on burgeoning subcultures and first word on block-rockin' beats of all persuasions.

Notice, too, several new columns and featurettes that will appear more-or-less monthly: "The Assembly Line," about music marketing and image; "Words and Guitars," a longer, contextual look at music; "Idiot/Savant," a quick take on the moment's hottest (or shallowest) thinker; and "Inconspicuous Consumption," a fetishistic look at new and weird products by *Beer Frame*'s Paul Lukas. Other columns and sections are on the way.

What will remain is SPIN's rather old-fashioned commitment to the kind of honest, innocent, and, if need be, raw inquiry that seems missing from our hyper-sanitized, increasingly conglomeratized world. In fact, the magazine will adopt as a kind of subtheme a pointed exploration into the workings and impact of marketing, packaging, and (funny how this works) spin. This month, for example, you will learn about the ingenious ways in which marketers reach the inner-city kids who have become our de facto style-setters.

My hope is that those of you who have followed SPIN over the years will stick with us as we build this magazine into what I hope will become the definitive chronicle of American music and youth culture. SPIN is just about the only large-circulation youth-oriented magazine around that is being edited, written, and produced by people with the same passions as its readers. We hope you make it yours.

Michael Hirschorn
Editor-in-Chief



October 1997



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Founder **Bob Guccione, Jr.**

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Thomas Beller got a dose of life "Among the Thugs" as he trailed Noel and Liam Gallagher across the U.S. for this month's Oasis cover story. "Liam is a lunatic," Beller says. "One time we were sitting in the atrium of this incredibly expensive hotel, and he was screaming and creating a major disturbance simply because he wanted to go to sound check. Your first reaction is, 'You're an idiot, you don't have to do this'; on the other hand, you watch these men in suits cower away from him, and it's kind of impressive in a fucked-up rock way." The author of the short-story collection *Seduction Theory* (Warner Books), Beller has also contributed to *The New Yorker*.



When alternastars Hole covered Fleetwood Mac's witchy El Lay classic "Gold Dust Women" for last year's *The Crow: City of Angels* soundtrack, a few pierced eyebrows were raised. Yet for longtime Stevie Nicks fan **Courtney Love**, who interviewed the *belle donna* for "Blonde on Blonde," the fit was as natural as a Versace gown at the Oscars. "Stevie is the first true female rock star and one of the few things in my life I'm totally unabashed about loving," says Love. "No one ever looked better being debauched." Ms. Love would like you to know that she has taken time from her "busy schedule filming action movies and designed to come back and save rock." Said saving, in the form of a new Hole album, is scheduled for early 1998.



Anyone who ever spent a sleepless night wondering what those foot-measuring gizmos at shoe stores are called (the Brannock Device) should find a kindred spirit in consumer-culture obsessive **Paul Lukas**, whose "Inconspicuous Consumption" column begins running in SPIN this month. "I look at those products that are either so weird and obscure we never see them, or so ubiquitous that we've essentially *stopped* noticing them," Lukas says. His work has been anthologized in the book *Inconspicuous Consumption* (Crown), and his zine, *Beer Frame*.



"Missy Elliott is so comfortable with herself that she doesn't put a lot of restrictions on her image," says **Karen R. Good**, who profiled the hit-making songwriter/producer/rapper in "Play Missy for Me." For instance, how many dives would dance around in a trash bag like Elliott did in the heavy-rotation "The Rain (Supa Dupa Fly)" video? "Missy's stylist insisted that the outfit was a 'vinyl suit, not no Hefty bag,'" Good says. A former editor at *Vibe*, Good has also written for *The New York Times Magazine*.



"A comics convention is a very strange, insular little universe with its own conception of stardom," says **Kyle Baker**, who with *Simpsons* writer Larry Doyle, transformed San Diego's annual Comic-Con into a comic for the "Strip Mall" feature. "People get extremely excited to meet the guy who draws Batman." Baker is the author/illustrator of *The Cowboy Wally Show* (Doubleday) and *Why I Hate Saturn* (DC Comics).

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Foo's Paradise

Thenk you for telling the complete story behind the Foo Fighters [cover, July]: Man has love for punk, claws his way through corporate bullshit, sees pest those who doubt him, finds other people who share his passion, and together they succeed. I couldn't compose e better tale if I tried.

SARAH GRAHAM
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Great erticle, but there must have been some kind of magic kite flying eround the Foo Fighters' photo shoot: What the hell are they staring et?

BILLY O'KEEFE
PARK RIOGE, ILLINOIS

I've got some news for Deve Grohl: If it weren't for a certain band that was so "nuts," "crazy," end full of "bullshit" and "drama," the Foo Fighters would still be playing for beer et the local hokey-pokey bar. The next time you talk ebout your Nirvana past, give credit where credit is due.

OUSTIN LEE
WASHINGTON, OKLAHOMA

Kurt mey be gone, end Deve's now playing guitar, but ex-Germ Pet Smear is maintaining an important Nirvane tradition: cross-dressing for photo shoots.

MARK O. MADONNA
MAPLEWOOD, NEW JERSEY

Iggy Pop won the "Coolest Uncle Award" in the late '80s, but it's time to pass the torch to "done it all, do it ell" Pet Smeer. He'd be great passing out presents et Christmes perties or taking kids to the zoo to watch the elephents mount. And he'd be sure to light up e family funeral with a smashing outfit.

PAT BOYLE
OMAHA, NEBRASKA

I appreciated the lyric translations in your Foo Fighters piece: Instead of "I'd rather leave then suffer this," I thought the words to "Monkey Wrench" went, "I'd rather leave this surfer bitch." Boy, wes I wrong.

ALLISON BARFIELD
GREEN VALLEY, NEVADA

Jurassic Rock Radio

As if the lousy weather and high taxes weren't enough, Poughkeepsie's computer-driven, Clessic Rock station WPDH ["The Song Remains the Seme," July] has given New Yorkers enother reeson to flee the state. "Real Rock'n'Roll" my ess. They shouldn't use that slogan until Chuck Berry and Beck join their playlist.

MIKE TOUKATLY
CLINTON, NEW YORK

The sarcasm dripping from Mark Schone's Classic Rock article comes as quite e surprise, considering thet both the mighty Aerosmith end ell four members of Kiss have graced your cover in the past year.

TODD K. OATES
COLUMBUS, OHIO

Upstate New York's WPDH and WPYX are the only stations willing to play my fevorite Bleck Sebbeth end Judes Priest songs during the long night-shifts I work. Dinosaur rock is elweys going to sound fresh to a teen that smokes out to it for the first time.

SEAN MURNIN
VIA INTERNET

Small Blue Thing

Good interview with Fione Apple ["Truly, Sadly, Deeply," July]. She's the hottest femele rocker out there—next to those Hanson triplets, of course.

DAVID GUARINO
BAYONNE, NEW JERSEY

I'm so glad I read that erticle on Fione Apple. Now I know that if I ever want e music career, ell I have to do is grow my hair out, wear blue contacts, end become psychotic.

CHERYLNN MILLER
SALINAS, CALIFORNIA

I guess Siouxsie Sioux, Tracy Chapman, Björk, PJ Harvey, Justine Frischmann, Ani DiFranco, k.d. lang—end the list continues—never knew that they couldn't meke it without long, blondish hair and blue eyes.

VANESSA SHANNEN
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

Fiona Apple: She's gorgeous, she's talented, and she's full of the most whiny, insipid load of psychobabble end babe-in-the-woods rhetoric imaginable. It's sad that e 19-yeer-old is still trying to pewn off the *Prozac Nation* theory on anyone who'll listen. Please do not meke this girl e spokesperson for the overly sensitive masses. Her friend mey be right about her weakness: With her newfound wealth, Fione mey want to consider backbone replacement surgery. Seems like she lost hers.

TONY STOCKTON
ROANOKE, VIRGINIA

Fiona Apple is truly, sadly, deeply misinformed. Saying that you can only make it in this world by being pretty is a completely bogus statement. I just hope that there aren't too many teenage girls who look up to her.

HEATHER JAMES
PORTLAND, OREGON

Aww, poor Fione. Let's all have a pity party.

HEIDI HISCHMANN
WARMINSTER, PENNSYLVANIA

Bungle in the Jungle

The next time you're in the mood for e jungle-tramp band, don't ruin the awesome Veruca Salt [Exposure, July] by dressing them in vegetation and rubbing them down with baby oil. They can rock just as well without your bullshit.

ANNA WHITNEY
DANA POINT, CALIFORNIA

Jonethen Gold had to be under the influence of something to compare Veruca Salt to Black Sabbath. Platform boots, black leather, and loud guitars ere not all it takes to make a great heavy-metal band.

NANCY BELL
BELLEAIR, FLORIDA

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RADIO DAZE: Radiohead's *OK Computer* may be the most "paranoid" album of the year, but in a recent SPINonline interview, guitarist Jonny Greenwood brushed off technoid conspiracy talk. Find out what's really on his mind September 26. **Keyword: Heavy**

MINUTE MAN: Über-bassist Mike Watt fills us in on his Madonna tribute band, his new solo album, and space-case Perry Farrell, who is teaching him how to talk to birds. Is Watt rock's answer to Dr. Dolittle? Log on September 30. **Keyword: Heavy**

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Don't Ask, Don't Tell

Maggie Estep's Ginsberg eulogy [Exposure, July] made *me* want to howl. Did it ever occur to her that Ginsberg didn't ogle her younger brother because he didn't fancy the kid? Her ignorance of gay sexuality, which she seems to think is all appetite and no taste, is astounding.

MIKE MEDNONNO
LONDONDERRY, NEW HAMPSHIRE

In your tribute to the late Allen Ginsberg, the poet is called a "sexual liberationist" and a "mythical sex elf," among other things, but not once is it simply stated that this great influence on generations of poets and songwriters was gay, gay, *gay*!

MICHAEL CHOLEWA
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

Fashion Victim

There must have been a couple of pages missing from July's "SPIN Fashion." Where were all those bathing suits that were supposedly so swimmable? All I saw was a shredded tank top, a $120 bikini bottom, and a close-up of a girl's bruised-looking eye. If you're going to devote only four pages to "power suits," at least show me something I can wear.

KATE LEE
WARREN, NEW JERSEY

Cool Things

Your article on UCLA's Fine Arts program ["Too Cool for School," July] filled me in on some of the best budding artists and their bizarrely wonderful projects. I can always count on you guys to cover the arts as well as you cover music.

KATHRYN POULIOS
READING, PENNSYLVANIA

Dennis Cooper must really be getting old if he believes that everything twentysomethings with two-tone hair do is, like, way cool. So UCLA students are taking drugs, listening to bands, and indulging in a little pop-culture slumming? Please—does anyone know any art students who *aren't* doing this?

LIZ KOTZ
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

The Baby-Sitters' Club

In regards to Internet censorship [Topspin, July], Americans have a problem with placing the responsibility of raising their children on somebody else, especially the government. Would anyone really want Bill Clinton—or better yet, a Kennedy—to raise their 14-year-old daughter? If you can't handle the responsibility, don't have a kid.

DARRICK BALL
LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS

Your Topspin on the neo-Puritan attacks on Internet content had me uttering "Amen." I hope that its colorful presentation of some very valid points struck a match in the dim minds of at least some supporters of censorship.

ERIC J. BULEY
TEMPE, ARIZONA

In a letter regarding anonymity in 12-step fellowships in the August Letters ["User Instructions"], SPIN mistakenly printed the name of the author, although he had been promised anonymity. The error violates the spirit of the letter and SPIN sincerely apologizes.

Write Letters. 6 West 18th Street, New York, NY 10011, or e-mail spinonline@aol.com. Always include your full name and phone number for verification. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

spinauthors



Houghton Mifflin recently published *Pilgrims*, a collection of short stories by SPIN staff writer Elizabeth Gilbert. *Pilgrims* is her first book.

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MICHAEL O'NEAL/OUTLINE

So Sue Me

The hardest working man in show business may be Suge Knight's lawyer.

From cofounder Suge Knight's string of assault and weapons charges to Snoop Doggy Dogg's murder case, the hip-hop giant known as Death Row Records has been almost as famous for its run-ins with the law as it has been for its multiplatinum records. But now, with Knight doing time for violating probation, and the IRS and the DEA involved in a federal grand jury investigation into the label's business dealings, Death Row looks more like a prime suspect for 1-800-LAWSUIT. In the last year alone, recording artists and others have filed civil suits seeking more than $300 million in damages from the label, with more sure to come. Here's a breakdown of some of the recent complaints.

Plaintiffs: Afeni Shakur (Tupac's mother) and Richard S. Fischbein, administrators of Tupac Shakur's estate
Damages sought: $150 million
Allegations: Complaint charges that—in an attempt to avoid paying Shakur's estate the money it's due under a handwritten deal signed by Tupac in 1995—Death Row made it look as though Shakur owed the label millions against unrecouped advances. These "fictitious expenses" allegedly include $175,000 in rent for an apartment and a house Shakur never lived in, $57,000 for another performer's Chevy Suburban, and $115,000 for jewelry Knight had reportedly given to Tupac as a gift. In addition, Shakur's estate claims it owns all rights to 152 unreleased songs by Tupac—worth an estimated $100 million—and that Death Row has refused to hand over the master recordings.
Death Row's response: None at press time.
Status: Two sides in settlement talks.

Plaintiff: Johnny Jackson
Damages sought: Estimated $200,000
Allegations: Claims Death Row has stiffed him on payments for production, writing, and performance work on the Tupac albums, including *All Eyez On Me* and the *Gridlock'd* soundtrack. Says Death Row agreed to pay him advances of $10,000 for each song, plus a three percent royalty rate, and asserts Death Row often "used strong arm tactics, including threats of actual physical violence, to 'convince' artists to 'waive' their rights to be compensated."
Death Row's response: General denial of all allegations.
Status: Two sides in settlement talks.

Plaintiff: Roderick Lockett
Damages sought: Unspecified—plaintiff will likely ask for in excess of $10 million.
Allegations: Charges that he "suffered life-threatening injuries" after Knight and some 25 "bodyguards, bouncers, and/or gang members" beat him up for no apparent reason at a 1993 Dr. Dre/Snoop Doggy Dogg concert. Injuries were so severe, claims the suit, that he still requires "the services of doctors and hospitals... including drugs, medicine, and X-rays."
Death Row's response: General denial of all allegations.
Status: December trial date set.

Plaintiffs: Dick Griffey and Tracy L. Curry
Damages sought: $150 million
Allegations: Claim they're part owners of Death Row, saying the label is a continuation of the recording company the two founded with Knight and Andre Young (aka Dr. Dre) in 1991. Charge that, after financing all the production costs for Dre's multiplatinum *The Chronic* in 1992, were wrongly cut out when Knight and Dre secretly incorporated Death Row a year later. Suit also says that Death Row Inc.'s founders made a "fraudulent transfer" of assets to the new label, including "rights to exploit the works of artists" such as Snoop Doggy Dogg and Kurrupt and Daz (aka Tha Dogg Pound), all of whom were allegedly signed under the original venture.
Death Row's response: General denial of all allegations.
Status: December trial date set.

Plaintiff: American Express Travel Related Services Company, Inc.
Damages sought: $1.6 million
Allegations: Claims Knight and his lawyer David Kenner racked up $1.6 million in unpaid charges for charter flights to Las Vegas, limo rides, and bills at hotels in Beverly Hills and Vegas. Suit charges that Death Row gave 60-odd "Does" (as in John) "apparent authority" to use Knight's and Kenner's Platinum and Gold cards.
Death Row's response: Defendants deny responsibility for any of the credit charges.
Status: Hearing is set for mid-November.

Plaintiff: Barbara Warren
Damages sought: $69,074.01
Allegations: In the spring of 1994, Warren says she made an oral agreement with Death Row "to provide costuming, styling, wardrobe, and shopping services" for such acts as Snoop Doggy Dogg, Tupac Shakur, and Tha Dogg Pound. By 1996, Warren says she was owed nearly $70,000 for work and expenses, which Death Row refused to pay.
Death Row's response: Label denies all allegations.
Status: No trial date has been set.



Ready for their money shot, clockwise, from left, Zia McCabe, Courtney Taylor, Eric Hedford, Peter Holmstrom.

EIKA AOSHIMA

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Pop Smart

Inside the Dandy Warhols' factory.

Band: The Dandy Warhols

Personnel: Courtney Taylor (guitar), Peter Holmstrom (guitar), Zia McCabe (keyboards/bass) and Eric Hedford (drums).

From: Portland, Oregon

Why we care: Their new album, *The Dandy Warhols Come Down*, is a joyously rocking update of the '70s British bell-bottom sound. Think T. Rex 2000.

Origins: "We sat in the laundry room of my building and learned how to play together," says Taylor, the hunky singer guy. "I'd never played guitar standing up before. It's hard."

Visuals: "Our video for 'Not If You Were the Last Junkie on Earth'? *Oy*. I thought we should have been further in the background, like part of the scenery. People who only see our video will get the wrong idea about us.

The right idea, in eight to ten words: "Okay: My eternal obsessive struggle with my own depression."

Availability: "I'm always looking for love. What I get is four or five...friends who are sexy enough to fool around with, but it's not like lock-and-load. That's great when you find it, but that's usually when I get insecure and fuck it up.

Great expectations: "Touring, deciding on videos and all that shit. God, it's grueling, and it's so different than what we thought growing up. Look at all those pictures of Kiss and Aerosmith. What ever happened to 'We're an American band, we're coming to your town, we'll help you party it down'?"

Obligatory Nietzsche reference: "Nietzsche said that happiness is when your control over your reality is waxing, and depression is when you feel that it's waning. That's why people in unhealthy relationships yell at each other—it's a quick fix for happiness, like a sugar rush. It's like a dysfunctional doughnut. I can't eat doughnuts and all that shit, though."

On becoming the next Evan Dando: "Evan Dando?!? Why would anyone ask me if I was the next fucking Evan Dando? I want to be the next what's-his-name fromxxn of Ulysses! He was a Sassy boy a few years back, and he's cool. I want to be the next *him*."

SUZAN COLÓN


In a world of strange tastes,
there's always Bass Ale.
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Baby Got Crack

The new weapon in the war against teen pregnancy.

The sex ed teacher sending her students home with a hard-boiled egg—to be ardently cared for as if it were an actual beby—sounds as outdated as en *After School Special* about the dangers of joyriding. Yet this well-intentioned, deeply misguided form of aversion therepy is still employed in some high schools, only now with way more sophisticated technology. Baby Think It Over is an amazingly lifelike doll that must be fed and comforted Tamagotchi-style by its teen mom or ded; the students' parenting skills—or lack thereof—are then monitored by a computer chip thet records instances of abuse (dropping, hitting, touch football) and neglect. Now, seeking to jack up the browbeating another notch, the baby's makers have introduced an infinitely more troubled sibling: Drug Dependent Baby Think It Over.

Ostensibly designed for the teenage crack addict who is unaware of the rigors of parenting a "special needs" child, the dependent simulator mimics the behavior of a drug-addled newborn: It shakes uncontrollably and emits a prerecorded cry, courtesy of an actual crack baby. Dependent's creators—Rick Jurmain and his wife, Mary, who run Baby Think It Over, Inc. from Wisconsin—admit they have no idea who is buying the special model (out of 20,000 simulators sold in the past year, only five percent have been dependent), nor do they have any data to support the doll's effectiveness. "But," says Mary, a bit defensively, "We think it's used for parenting education more so than as a means of prevention."

It may not have much impact either way, according to Greg Tardiff, who has counseled addicted teenagers for five years. "A kid who's using—their priority is getting high," he says. "A boy would look at thet thing end go '*Woo-hoo*!' and chuck it out the window." Plus, as Tardiff points out, "the kid almost looks too healthy—the legs and arms should be skinnier, you should be able to see ribs, and the skin should be gray."

The Jurmains say they're in the process of building a better, more harrowing simulator, but Mary refuses to discuss future upgrades. "High-tech," she says pragmatically, "is a very cutthroat market."

MAUREEN CALLAHAN









Brand New Bag Not just for DJs enymore: Anyone with an ellegience to old-school vinyl end a vision of a future where we're all devoted to block rockin' beets can shoulder one of these DJ bags as an officially sanctioned hepcat briefcase. Introduced six-odd years ago, the 12-inch nylon totes are now offered as fashion accessories by such labels es Pervert, X-Large, and Fresh Jive. While these slim, sturdy shoulder packs are ideal for records, they work almost es well filled with papers, a laptop, or—shhh—CDs. Just be careful how you stuff it. A lumpy DJ beg is e dead giveway that you're an ersatz turntablist. **DAVID COLMAN**

CHERRY KIM

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Oh, Boy!

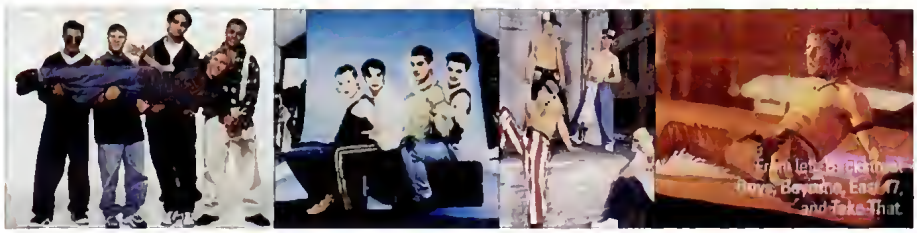
The latest wave of teenyboppers are swimming on both ends of the pool.

BY BARRY WALTERS

Five torturously available actor/model/waitar types hang around the kind of abandoned park you might see in a news segment about runaway youth or public sex. It's obvious from the way these pouty boymen are dressed that they're not here to play basketball. Rain falls and a celebration begins—shirts open; hairless, pumped-up chests and washboard stomachs gyrate in tantalizing close-up. Just when you expect an orgy to break out, an ID appears on the screen. It's the **Backstreet Boys'** hit video "Quit Playing Games (With My Heart)."

The Florida-based singing/dancing group is the first teen-targeted act to score in the wake of Hanson and the Spice Girls' American breakthrough, but in Europe and Asia, they are just one multimillion-selling star act among a dizzying constellation of boy-bands boasting countless screaming admirers, the likes of which we haven't seen since the glory days of New Kids on the Block. However, unlike the lovably dorky NKOTB dudes, the new wave of pop boys look more like what one might find in a *Details* fashion shoot, or the latest Jeff Stryker hardcore flesh extravaganza. The latent teen-dream element is now blatant. Harmony pop has gone homo.

Once again the Brits can take credit for pushing



From left to right: Boyzone, Backstreet Boys, Boyzone, East 17, and Take That.

the lavender pop envelope. The current boy-band explosion has its roots in the early '90s success of Take That, the quintet that conquered the globe while America was knee-deep in grunge. The group's early hits were produced by Ian Levine, former DJ of Heaven, London's largest gay club. Levine also masterminded the archetypal '80s Brit boy-band, Seventh Avenue, an ever-changing pack of pseudo-"rent boys" (Anglo slang for hustlers) who adorned highly homoerotic 12-inch record-sleeve photos set at the beach or gym.

The difference between Seventh Avenue and the Backstreet Boys—or **Boyzone**, **East 17**, **'N Sync**, **Caught in the Act**, **Bed & Breakfast**, **2Be3**, **911**, etc.—is marketing. While Seventh Avenue was intended as a pretty British answer to America's butch Village People, the current boy-bands are not only targeted at men with a taste for pop and soft quasi-porn but at girls feeling the first pangs of desire. Anybody who's ever been to an Erasure concert knows the special affinity between gay male adults and female teens: They both appreciate a toe-tappin' tune celebrating love, loss, and codependency, and their combined buying power builds pop empires. Bananarama, Dead or Alive, Rick Astley—'80s Brit dance stars overseen by the Stock-Aitken-Waterman hit factory—dominated the pop charts *and* the gay disco, and they're the model for today's teenybop Svengalis.

The fact that most of these bands appear queer doesn't hamper the teen (or, let's face it, preteen) female imagination: The boys' clean, preened, and not-so-mean nature only makes them safer for girls who aren't yet ready for a real-life dude who might bust a move. Managers, record companies, and T-shirt manufacturers have a vested interest in maintaining the party line that these girly-blokes are straight, and therefore obtainable for any fantasy (some even resemble boyish, new-school lesbians). But their handlers are becoming less bashful. At the height of East 17's popularity in 1995, manager Tom Watkins told European MTV that the look of his act was "rough trade"—slang for a straight tough who lets gay fellows do him for cash or kicks. Recently, the hilariously named Caught in the Act—the half-Dutch, half-British quartet massive in Germany—came out of the closet as three-quarters queer.

The current duality reaches its absurd apogee in Boyzone's video, "Mystical Experience." Images of the Irish teens appear on the wide-screen TV of a young hunk in a posh apartment. Whether or not you recognize the stubbly viewer in question as **Enrique "Son of Julio" Iglesias**, who first sang "Experiencia Religiosa," is irrelevant. His charmed grin, rapt gaze, and phone call at the end of the video to Boyzone's office suggests not mere approval but total infatuation.

Do boy-bands get fan mail from male admirers? Nick, the Backstreet Boys' 17-year-old blond heartthrob, had this to say:

"Hoooo! Um, I don't think so too much, um, ah, maybe a few here and there, but, um, hey, I don't know—yeah, we do, basically, sometimes."

LOVE+HATE

An earnest-yet-ironic [sic] compendium of stuff we thought you ought to know about.

LOVE

ROBERT MITCHUM With his brooding turns in *The Night of the Hunter* and *Cape Fear*, Mitchum cared both more and less than anybody had a right. Hollywood's deepest existential tough exited his manly vessel July 1, 1997.

THE DANDY WARHOLS **"Not If You Were the Last Junkie on Earth" VIDEO** David LaChapelle's homage to the heroin overdose as rock's definitive, balletic moment—featuring the Hypodermic Dancers.

FLOOR TECHNO Get your fix of big-beat electro tricks—DJ Icey's *The Funky Breaks* (ffrr), *Sunshine State of Mind* compilation (ffrr), and the *Electro Breakz* compilation (StreetBeat).

CARLINHOS BROWN Dubbed the "Brazilian Prince," he may just be the greatest living rock star.

"DJ DE DA" TV COMMERCIAL VWs + Slackers + '80s Synth Germans = Mindless Minimalist Fun for the Whole Family.

MARILYN MANSON WEB SITE Where's the love? In Satan's hands, of course.

FATBOY SLIM Formerly of the Housemartins, Beats International, and Mighty Dub Katz, Norman Cook is the drinking man's DJ, kicking happy-hour techno-funk that never fails to insult your intelligence. In a good way, of course.

THE BOY ON MTV'S *LOVELINE* A voice of reason amid the idiocy.

HATE

ABC SPORTS After 36 years, these cretins canceled the Pro Bowlers Tour, and we're not gonna keep quiet about it. Big up to Chris Schenkel and Nelson Burton, Jr., two dope MCs.

***SPAWN*—THE ALBUM (IMMORTAL/EPIC)** Henry Rollins and Goldie? Metallica and DJ Spooky? Stabbing Westward and Josh Wink? Yep, all starring in the worst album idea since *Kathia Laa Gifford's Trip-Hop Christmas*.

GRAND ROYAL Going for more paper quality and less content in the latest issue, it's the *Martha Stewart Living* of "underground" zines. Yo, bring back "The Captain."

SLASH Recording with Insane Clown Posse and Alice Cooper, mugging in the Blackstreet video, this ex–guitar hero will work for food.

MANSUN "Wide Open Space" VIDEO The Fixx is in.

COWBOY HATS Latest supermodel/Eurotrash/celebrity fashion accessory. Fuck all y'all.

THE OTHER GUY ON MTV'S *LOVELINE* The idiocy.

FROM LEFT: MARK CAIRNS/RETNA; KIM TONELLI/CORBIS; GREGORY JACKSON/CORBIS; DUNCAN RAIBAN/ALL ACTION/RETNA.

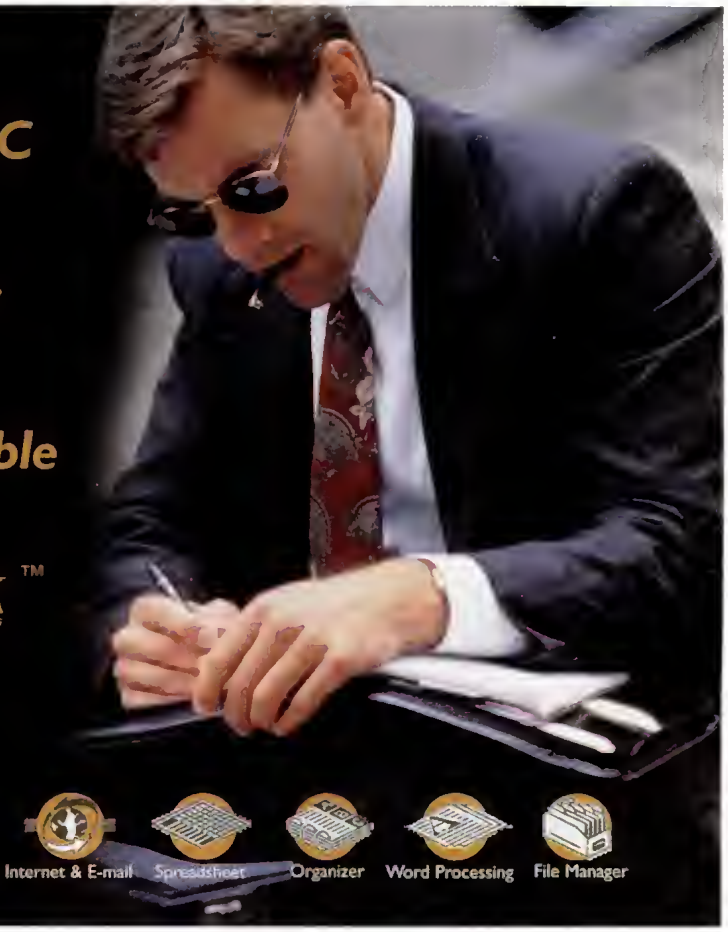
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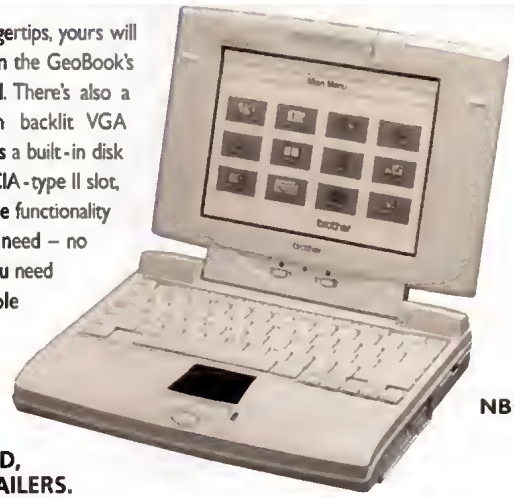
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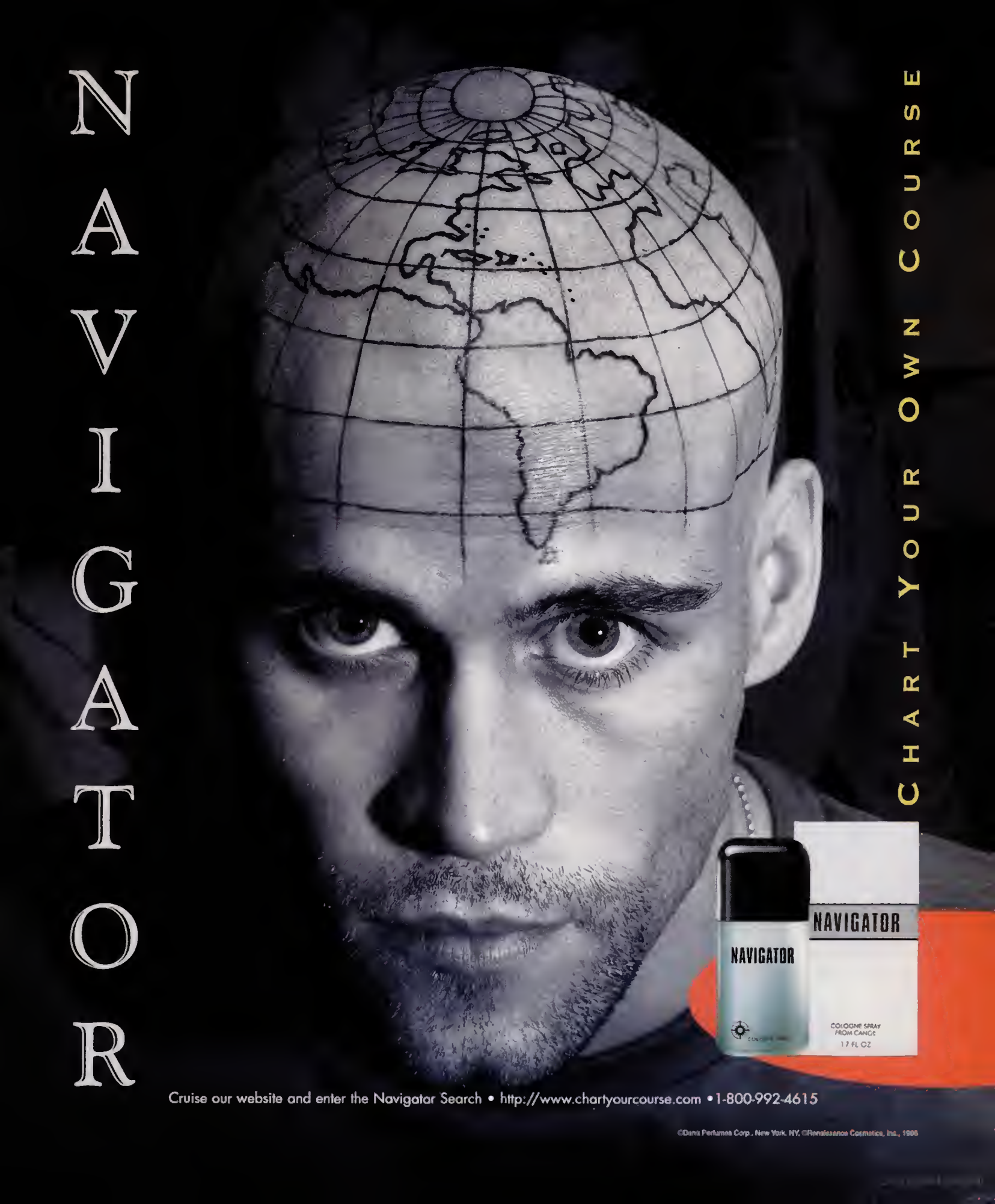
Meet the new Scream Queen, Sarah Michelle Gellar, a.k.a. Buffy the Vampire Slayer.

It was during an episode this past spring, in which a band of high-school meanies possessed by the spirits of evil hyenes ettacked and devoured their principal, that *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* finally crossed the line. Exhumed this year from the dud 1992 movie—ironically, to live again in the entertainment graveyard that is the WB Network—*Buffy* went from an intriguing oddity to a brilliently sustained exercise in setting the nightmares of teenhood against the assaults of the undead.

"What's scarier than high school? What's scarier than adolescence?" says Sarah Michelle Gellar, the 20-year-old actress who portrays the titular heroine selected by ancient forces to save the world from encroaching evil. With her tae kwon do–trained hatchet hands, flying feet, and her inexhaustible supply of one-liners—"A stake through the heart, a little sunlight, it's like falling off a log"—Gellar's petite, implecable Buffy is a reluctant vigilante thrust into e world of virgin-devouring praying mantes and spontaneously combusting cheerleaders.

The physical and verbal dexterity she regularly displays on *Buffy* has made Gellar—previously known es Erica Kane's long-suffering daughter on *All My Children*—a rising horror heroine. During the show's summer hiatus, she filmed two consecutive shockers, *Scream 2* and—by the same screenwriter, the very voguish Kevin Williamson—*I Know What You Did Last Summer*. "I'm going to get one of those nice movies one day," says Gellar. "One that takes plece in e house, in a room with two people. But," she adds, "the house will probably be haunted." **JONATHAN BERNSTEIN**

DAVID JENSEN

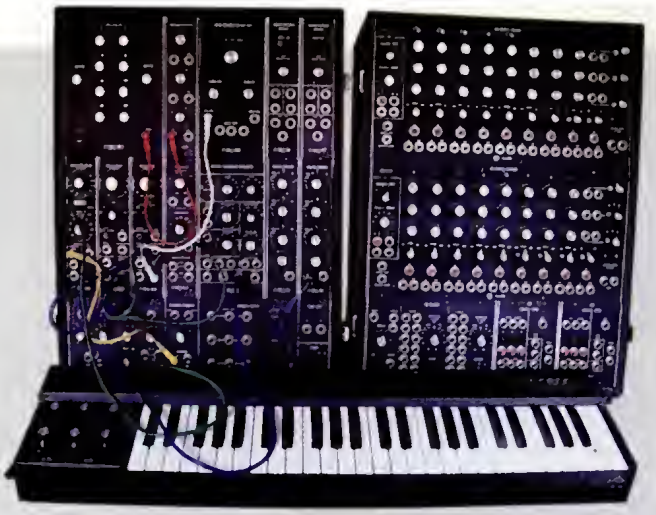

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And the Bland Played On

Meet the new pop, same as the old pop.

Pop, like plastic, is endlessly recyclable; a fact that's never been more apparent than in our current era of pop revanchism. Today's milquetoast outfits in fact bear an uncanny resemblance to the ones a few decades old. Below, a rundown of how the song has remained quite precisely the same. **ANDREW BEAUJON**

Past		Present
	=	
THE OSMONDS		**HANSON**
Five Mormon brothers from the heartland start out singing religious numbers, then hit pop pay dirt when a younger brother showcases his ability to sing exactly like a member of the Jackson 5 on debut single, "One Bad Apple."		Three home-schooled brothers from the heartland start out singing religious numbers, then hit pop pay dirt when a younger brother showcases his ability to sing exactly like a young Michael Jackson on debut single, "MmmBop."
	=	
MELANIE		**JEWEL**
Wobbly-voiced, caterwauling young folksinger with a penchant for candles. Sauciest lyric: "I've got a brand new pair of roller skates / You've got a brand new key."		Wobbly-voiced, caterwauling young folksinger with a penchant for see-through dresses. Sauciest lyric: "You can be Henry Miller / And I'll be Anais Nin."
	=	
GARY LEWIS & THE PLAYBOYS		**WALLFLOWERS**
Los Angeles band whose frontman's father, Jerry Lewis, is ecstatically revered in France. Their reverb-drenched oeuvre made Jay & the Americans seem like the Holy Modal Rounders.		Los Angeles band whose frontman's father, Bob Dylan, is ecstatically revered in America. Their reverb-drenched oeuvre makes the Dave Matthews Band seem like Atan Teenage Riot.
	=	
HARRY CHAPIN		**BOB CARLISLE**
Raspy singer/songwriter leaves his days of documentary filmmaking behind and scores big, big hit with "Cat's in the Cradle," a treacly account of how little he was there during his son's childhood.		Raspy singer/songwriter leaves his days of writing for Dolly Parton behind and scores big, big hit with "Butterfly Kisses," a treacly account of how much he was there during his daughter's childhood.
	=	
KITTY KALLEN		**MEREDITH BROOKS**
Derivative, cloying-voiced singer who offers a less-than-enlightened view of pre-feminist-era female identity: "Say I look nice when I'm not / Touch my hair as you pass my chair / Little things mean a lot."		Derivative, cloying-voiced singer who offers a less-than-enlightened view of postfeminist-era female identity: "I'm a bitch / I'm a tease / I'm a goddess on my knees."



Isn't it Ironic? Actually, it is. The Moog as pop punch line.

Back in the mid-'60s, the Moog synthesizer was a brainy new contraption used in avant-garde music and classy soundtracks. Today, high/lowbrows like the Pulsars, Weezer, the Rentals, the Dandy Warhols, That Dog, and others have rediscovered the synthesizer, taking to its sci-fi blips and enalog farts like they were hot buttered "Popcorn." No simple revival, the instrument of science invented by hobbyist Robert Moog to bridge technology and ert now bridges '70s cheese and '90s savvy.

After all, nothing feels more anachronistic, more hilariously pitiful than a vision of the future that never saw the sunrise. To so many contemporary Moogists, who take synth-pop acts like the Cars and Gary Numan more seriously than the originals ever did, every bleat is an obscure joke on pop success. It's the ultimate effects pedal—hit it and irony oozes out. Now Bob Moog knows how Darwin felt when he watched *Planet of the Apes*.

But there ere other ways to play. If the Moog is usually heard in contexts whiter than Wonder bread, its unpredictable oscillators give it endless funky possibilities. Money Mark, for instance, features Moog instruments on most of his upcoming album, while putting the cuffs on any retro notion. "I'm trying to go back to these various points in time and take over and evolve things," he says. "I consider it almost reparation for a certain moment." **RJ SMITH**

The White-Boy Shuffle

Academia's latest fad: Figuring out what it means to be Caucasian.



As America's ethnic makeup grows ever more multicultural, it's becoming increasingly clear that white won't be the country's most popular skin color for long. For academics, ever attuned to the possibility of discovering more minority groups, it means *a new field of study*. Thirty years after the birth of African-American Studies, a growing group of scholars is now pursuing what it means to be white.

Viewing white as a racial identity, not the default option on a census form, whiteness scholars pursue everything from deconstructing chain-saw sculpture to figuring out why it took so long for Irish immigrants to get themselves classified Caucasian a hundred years ago. Whiteness Studies even has its own internal divisions. One branch, led by whiteness scholar and former Harvard lecturer Noel Ignatiev, wants whiteness to be considered a racist precept. "Whiteness," explains Ignatiev, "is either privilege or the defense of privilege." His fire-breathing journal, *Race Traitor* (slogan: "Treason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity"), is dedicated to the "abolition of the white race," not genocidally but as a "social category." You out there, Rush Limbaugh?

Ignatiev has something of a dusty revolutionary in him: not so for the other, poppier side of Whiteness Studies. Take, for instance, Berkeley grad student Matt Wray, who's busy studying trailer parks and Spam as totems of a culture in decline. Along with fellow student Annalee Newitz, Wray has edited a collection called *White Trash: Race and Class in America* (Routledge Press), which argues that the trailer park experience is "a kind of victimized identity that one can claim as a white person."

Nobody can major in Trailer Park Studies just yet. But the five-year-old subject is a very precocious kid: The first whiteness conference, held this past spring, attracted hundreds of academics and intellectual-trend surfers, and David Roediger's first-out-of-the-gate book *The Wages of Whiteness* (Verso)—*The Celestine Prophecy* of the discipline—is in its sixth printing. If there are a few courses dedicated to the subject, it might be because, as Newitz puts it, "some people think it's about how cool white people are." **CARL SWANSON**

OSMONDS: MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA; MELANIE: LYNN GOLDSMITH/CORBIS; GARY LEWIS: PHOTOFEST; HARRY CHAPIN: ANDY FREEBERG/RETNA; KITTY KALLEN: PICTORIAL PARADE; MOOG: DAVID WHITE COLLECTION; WONDER BREAD: CHERRY KIM.



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Our Binkies, Our Selves

The adult baby boom.

We've all learned the psychic value of getting in touch with our inner child. But our inner infant? "Paraphilic Infantilism" is a term psychiatrists use to describe a full-grown adult's overpowering need to be powdered, diapered, and gently tucked into an oversized crib. It's more than just a clinical condition, though; it's a bona fide "alternative lifestyle." In the United States and throughout the world (most notably in England, Germany, and Australia), there's a growing subculture based around those (mostly men) who regularly regress to the blanky and ba-ba stage.

ABs (short for Adult Babies) first went public with a Baby Week celebration in San Francisco in the early '90s. Since then, the Internet, with its reassuring anonymity, has become the leading forum for ABhood. Along with hooking up with other ABs, today's infantilist can frolic through a multimedia playpen of Web sites that offer audiotapes ("Come Home to Mommy"), videos ("Big Baby Kim"), magazines (*Modern Mommy*), and books (*Little Chucky*). At Diaper Pail Friends, one of the most popular AB Web sites, one can purchase all the necessary components for a jumbo layette. And if hysterical spouses or diaper rash interrupt Web crawling, there's the 24-hour AB Hotline.

With their emergence online, ABs are intimating that their binky-loting, nappy-pin–pushing ways are progressing from the *DSM-IV* and may soon be considered as mainstream as Dennis Rodman in a dress. Until then, ABs must make do with occasional get-togethers where everyone is free to act like, well, a baby. "It's a big phenomenon," says Polly Borland, whose deeply disturbing photographs of adult babies (at right) will be published early next year in England. "It's kind of like homosexuality was 20 years ago."

Coming out on the Net may never lead to the AB equivalent of Stonewall; after all, ABs might not exactly be cut out for militant protest. Says Borland: "They're the gentlest, kindest people I've ever met."

FREDERICK KAUFMAN



Sucking in the suburbs: scenes from *Delta*.

Raw Footage

Video artist Steve Doughton's Weird Science.

In *Ferrum 5000*, Steve Doughton's short film, butt-headed aliens and dancing girls in silver bathing suits share screen time with boiling mud pots and vaporizing pools of sulfur. An amalgam of Doughton's memories of *Star Trek* and Zeigfield musicals, *Ferrum*'s eerie juxtaposition of long-legged Rockettes with sensuous waterfalls suggests that our voyeuristic fascination with nature (best exemplified by the recent spate of Discovery Channel knockoffs) makes images of gushing geysers and volcanic lava no different than those of porn stars having elaborately choreographed sex.

Doughton, who has filmed videos for both Pavement and Iggy Pop, and directed the wonderfully wacked "Ventolin" video for Aphex Twin, began showing *Ferrum 5000* at raves in New York in the early '90s. "I'd set up 15 projectors and literally light the club up with images," he says. The rave experience gave Doughton the idea for his new project, *Delta*, which is showing at Marianne Boesky Gallery in New York City this fall. The film consists of six different screens, all running simultaneously, and all part of a larger narrative centering around Doug, a twentynothing with a fetish for fake surgery. Infused with a cheerful creepiness that has become the signature style of the Pacific Northwest, *Delta*'s final sequence—a surreal party scene in which Doug performs lamb liver surgery while his doctor father questions his forceps technique—is both madcap and macabre, a queasy commentary on dysfunctional families and parents' unwillingness to deal with their progeny's bizarre obsessions.

Though the 37-year-old Doughton is the son of a prominent Portland, Oregon, doctor, he claims his movie is not autobiographical. He and his dad get along fine, and he doesn't slice up cow intestines in his bedroom. Nevertheless, Doughton clearly sympathizes with his film's hero. "Doug may be strange," he says, "but at least he's trying to experiment, to make something new, something akin to art."

DARCEY STEINKE

TOP: POLLY BORLAND/SYGMA.

"I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO TALK TO THE BOSS'S GIRL," CHET TOLD HER. "RELAX," SHE SAID, "I'M JUST BUMMING A KAMEL." "WELL, OK, THEN" HE REPLIED, "JUST ONE."



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Guns and Poses The new breed of computer game action heroes.

First person shoot-'em-ups like Doom and Quake have long been pitched to Angry White Geeks looking to play at being Angry White Rambos. But the new generation of computer game heroes are a veritable Benetton ad of multiculti inclusion: blacks, women, and—oh so cutting edge—poor white trash. Do game manufacturers have a case of five-years-after-the-fact PCitis, or have they just found novel ways to sell the same old "plug in and kick ass!" fantasy? Here are four exemplars of computer gaming's new breeding. **DAVID KUSHNER**

	Interstate '76	Tomb Raider	Outlaws	Redneck Rampage
game:				
hero:	Taurus	Lara Croft	Marshal James Anderson	Leonard 'n' Bubba
high concept:	Taurus, the smooth cat with the Freddie "Boom-Boom" Washington Afro, started as a sidekick in this year's Interstate '76, wherein he battles a motley crew of auto vigilantes. He'll rightfully get the starring role in the upcoming sequel.	Armed with a flair for both logic and firepower, Croft swims through sea caves, finds mystical treasures, and looks great blasting away wild animals.	Shoot-outs in the Old West, served up Sergio Leone–style. The son of a tough sheriff who taught him to fire a pistol at age eight, Anderson is out to avenge the death of his wife. A major breakthrough: Most games have less plot than bad pornos.	Bessie, the state fair champion pig, has been abducted by spacefolk. In between Buds, Leonard and Bubba gun down aliens and rescue their prized swine. *Men in Black? Men in Overalls!*
virtual reality:	Who's the man who wouldn't let down his brother-man? Taurus!	So what if she's got the bod of a *Baywatch* jogger? It's her mind that counts. Real women will love her.	An existential Western that asks really *modern* questions: Should Anderson blow away the bad guys or just join them?	A Southern Gothic alternative to Quake, by way of *The X-Files*.
reality:	Instant blaxploitation cred for subdivision B-boys.	Croft personifies the essential techie-boy wet dreams: sex, violence, and the ability to manipulate a really hot chick.	Outlaws hits its mark: Even Yul Brynner's animatronic *Westworld* cowboy would shed a tear for the good marshal.	More fun with *Hee Haw* stereotypes; Leonard and Bubba are an urbanite's idea of country folk: alcoholic, aggressive, and, quite possibly, inbred.



Alli Truch

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I design album covers for Elektra.

Monty, my nephew, and the cutest guy I know under 3 feet. (He's probably the only thing in my life that doesn't accept Visa.)

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A gazillion ticket stubs. Go figure, I like music.

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U R N O T G

PlayStation

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Great balls of fire: clockwise from top, Nicolas Cage in *Con Air*, "Boomer" in *Independence Day*, a tunnel in *Daylight*, Air Force One in *Independence Day*, and Jason Patric in *Speed 2*.

Fireball Walk With Me

Understanding Hollywood's favorite special effect.

At the close of another Hollywood action summer, it's time to review what we've learned about fire safety. In one blockbuster after another, in blast after blast, our favorite actors have been surviving deadly fireballs in record numbers. So, what exactly is the nature of a fireball? How fast do fireballs move? And what's the best way to escape one?

One method is simply to outrun it. When Laurence Fishburne encountered a fireball on his spaceship in this summer's *Event Horizon*, he nimbly sprinted ahead of it down a Deathstar-like corridor to safety. (Fishburne probably learned this trick from watching *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, wherein Geena Davis and Samuel L. Jackson also ran just ahead of a fireball, narrowly cheating death by jumping out a window.) Alternately, you can emulate Arnold Schwarzenegger, who, in *True Lies*, swam underwater to escape the pesky fireball that was after him. Sound too athletic? Relax. If you own a vehicle, you can certainly utilize it for fireball evasion. In *Chain Reaction*, for instance, Keanu Reeves drove a motorcycle away from an atomic blast licking at his heels, and he ended up perfectly fine.

In real life, fireballs are perfectly deadly and utterly murderous exploding spheres of heat, light, and matter. But in movies, they show restraint. In fact, fireballs behave exactly as Hollywood boulders used to, moving just slightly slower than the object of their pursuit. No film proved this equation more definitively than *Independence Day*. While President Bill Pullman was barely escaping a fireball with his Air Force One jet plane, a friendly Labrador retriever was *outrunning* a similar fireball over in Los Angeles.

Nobody can fault directors for using new fireball special effects. Unlike the dangerous real explosions of yore, the rolling-fireball-behind-the-actor is a cheap, 100-percent-safe computer-generated thrill. And it looks great. The only problem is the apparent lack of agreement among movies (or within the same movie) over how fast fireballs actually travel.

I called a former Cal-Tech physicist named Dr. Leonard Mlodinow, and told him about my recent observations of Hollywood fireballs.

"Do any of these scenes sound realistic?" I asked.

"Well...fireballs move at approximately the speed of sound," Mlodinow said.

"So could a person outrun a fireball?" I asked.

"No."

"Could Geena Davis?"

"No."

"What's that mean for our movies?"

Mlodinow hesitated. He's a movie fan; the answer pained him. Finally, and with obvious regret, he said, Air Force One might get away. "But the dog's in big trouble."

ELIZABETH GILBERT

CON AIR, SPEED 2: EVERETT COLLECTION; DAYLIGHT: PHOTOFEST



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We Are the Brands The ad world's new manifesto.

Jeen-Marie Dru is a French intellectual for the Starbucks set. Equal parts advertising guru (he's chairman of a multinational ad agency) and Continental egghead, Dru works from a simple and obvious premise—that advertising can change people's perceptions—and transforms it into e manifesto for our times. His new book, *Disruption*, declares that products don't just cover feet or clean hair, they can offer a new emotion, opinion, or reason to live—all free with purchase. Dru's theory of brand empowerment has played well with the ed world: Some of today's most recognizable marketing campaigns are informed by Dru, or some type of *Dru-isme*. Which makes Dru's ideas worth knowing about—or at least knowing a *little* bit about.

THOMAS GOETZ

The Global Office Park

According to Dru, we live in an era of corporations, not governments; of consumers, not citizens; and—above all—of brands, not beliefs. From Coca-Cola to Dannon yogurt, a brand "transcends geography, adapt[s] to diverse cultures," end can instill stronger loyalties than God or country. But a brand doesn't become a Brand Neme without Dru and his ad-guy posse, here to uncork a product's potential and set it free.



Fight the Power

The first step of "disruption" ("not e pretty word," Dru admits) is to know what you're disrupting. "In a world of hypercompetition, we can no longer use the same old recipes," Dru writes. There are two ways to break the mold: technology or marketing. Apple's Macintosh, for instance, was a perfect technological breakthrough: It bucked the rule that computers were only for specialists and offered a new model fit for the common man. Or Federal Express, which found a way to get a package across the country overnight—and then promised to do it every time.

Brand Aid

Where technology fails to bust the paradigm, advertising can fake it for you. The best brands, Dru says, "own" their hipness: Pepsi owns youth culture, Nike owns self-actualization, Virgin owns libertinism, and the Body Shop owns social consciousness. This is "disruption" distilled: false distinctions—Coke from Pepsi, Nike from Reebok—thet nonetheless make us want to choose sides, and, of course, consume, consume, consume.

The Greet Leep Forward

Done right, brands can become an experience, and consumption can turn into an emotion. Brands are not mere products, Dru argues—"a brand is like a person," with "opinions and attitudes as well." They can relieve us of the burden of making decisions—who we want to be, what we want to believe in. Indeed, the best marketing can spawn whole social movements. So by eating Ben & Jerry's Rainforest Crunch, the otherwise apathetic do their part for the environment—their paunch only proves their dedication. So Dockers, that line of white-boy chinos, has really revolutionized the corporate world by making possible the casual Friday. In the perfectly disrupted world, our personalities will be restrained only by our ability to buy one: a Ben & Jerry's conscience today, a Ralph Lauren life of manicured-lawn ease tomorrow. Then, writes Dru, "consuming a product will be tantamount to...voting for a brand's culture." Cast your ballot today at a mall near you.

Chemical Reaction



Anybody who's ever passed out or gone home with some troll after a long day's night of dancing and partaking knows that music and drugs don't always mix. Unless the drug is Ecstasy. Here's Soft Cell's Marc Almond, New York City circa 1981, rhapsodizing about his first dose of vitamin E and dancing at Studio 54: "Every record I heard...was the best record I'd ever heard." Matthew Collin, in his book *Altered State: The Story of Ecstasy Culture and Acid House*, faithfully charts the path of "Ecstasy" (or MDMA) from its mundane origins with the German pharmaceutical company Merck to its hipster beginnings as the driving force in New York's late-'70s black gay dance scene, which is how it first reached England. Gulped by legions of desperately bored, dance-music-obsessed British teens in the late '80s, the drug made an immediate cultural impact. As chronicled in *Altered State*, the not-so-secret history of recent British dance music is that it makes limited sense unless you've actually been washed up in the "sensuous tidal wave," as Boy George muses. It's a hoot of a story, and even though Collin ventures only the most tentative insights into *why* all this was so much fun, *Altered State* is the first book willing and savvy enough to take the trip. CHARLES AARON



Blast pills: Patty Duke in the film version of *Valley of the Dolls*.

THE KOBAL COLLECTION

Welcome to the Dollhouse

Until recently, Jacqueline Susann's *Valley of the Dolls* was the best-selling novel of all time. Also, until recently, it was out of print. These two facts are not, as it turns out, irreconcilable. *Dolls*, the story of three pill-popping women of great privilege and greeter bathos, arrived in 1966 and almost immediately established itself as a pop-culture phenomenon. None other than Susann's husband conceded that in the case of *Dolls*, storytelling was beside the point. The public was buying Susann, he said, not a "goddamn pile of paper." A prototypically modern celebrity, Susann was frivolous end brassy, and her outlandish behavior helped turn her into a drag queen icon. After all, she practically was a drag queen herself.

Not that the content of the book was *entirely* irrelevant. With its benign view on drug use and actuel, if not fevorable, depictions of gay characters, *Dolls* became a gay cult novel long before anyone spoke of gay fiction. And by managing to publish a novel featuring oral sex and abortions at a time when the leading houses were turning down *Lolita*, Susann was championed by *Cosmopolitan* editor Helen Gurley Brown and reviewed—seriously—by *Ms.* founder Gloria Steinem.

Despite Grove Press's recent reissue campaign, Susann will still probably best be remembered not as the author of a camp classic but rather for a far more dubious achievement: She made the world safe for Jackie Collins. LINDA HALL


a_rod@takeyadeep.com

More Glum in the New World

Ed Brubaker sends up post-millennial stupor and stupidity in his new series, *Detour*.

Imagine a future that's neither apocalyptic nor idyllic—the only difference is that the stuff that sucks now will suck a little bit harder. *Detour* (Alternative Press), a new series by Ed Brubaker, takes place a few years after the year 2000, in a post-slack dystopia of daily earthquakes in which oxygen has to be pumped into houses. What separates it from the so-realistic-it's-boring strain of adult comics is the eerie feeling that in *Detour*, the world isn't necessarily worth saving.

Detour has an unlikely protagonist in Christopher, a bespectacled twerp who shares an apartment with Spool, a nomadic weirdo, and Theo and Allison, who like to walk around naked when they think nobody's home. Chris is constipated, self-righteous, and penny-pinching. He's a whiner with an inheritance who never leaves the apartment—the kind of guy anyone who's ever had a roommate automatically wants to throttle. The story follows Chris on his zealous march while Spool, *Detour*'s bleak heart, gloomily collects corpses of pigeons that mysteriously drop dead from the city's mini-temblors.

Brubaker, whose previous books include the stuporous *Lowlife* series and the exquisite one-off *At The Seams*, has an uncanny ear for dialogue and a sharp skewer for the kind of pretensions likely to endure past the millennium. One of *Detour*'s most vivid scenes shows Chris flashing back to college, when he transformed himself into a wussy activist at the feet of a girl in a NO BLOOD FOR OIL shirt. "When the whole thing blew up in his face, he awoke to find himself the head of a committee fighting to ban smoking in films."

Detour makes effective use of silhouette, and the heavy blacks evoke the suffocating, oxygen-deprived near-future Brubaker envisions, a world in which Chris spies on his roommates through peepholes in the ceiling. "In the book, it starts to dawn on people that these earthquakes are a sign that the world is ending," says Brubaker. "Given the cast of *Detour*, maybe that's not such a bad thing."

KEN KURSON



Future imperfect: Chris in the house.




STILL GROOVIN SINCE 1960
Gadzooks
CHAMPS Sports
Pacific Sunwear
HANG TEN

THE ICE STORM
DIRECTED BY ANG LEE
FOX SEARCHLIGHT

KICKED IN THE HEAD
DIRECTED BY MATTHEW HARRISON
OCTOBER FILMS

GRAVESEND
DIRECTED BY SALVATORE STABILE
MANGA ENTERTAINMENT

Desperate Living

A trio of psychodramas prove that social entropy is timeless.

BY MICHAEL ATKINSON

The year's only film to date that's bound for and worthy of Best Picture laurels, ***The Ice Storm*** is on the surface a melancholy but bemused Mona Lisa portrait of a very particular time and place: wealthy Connecticut bedroom communities in the early '70s, when polyester suits were in, Nixon haunted the airwaves, cocktails flowed like monsoon rainwater, and the sexual revolution began to sour the lives of restless suburbanites. At its heart, the film is a humane, hilarious, and rich-as-mousse dispatch on the woes, risks, and costs of the all-American family.

Based on the heartbreaking novel by Rick Moody (a SPIN contributor), Ang Lee's movie is the kind of scrupulously adult, deeply imagined piece of work Hollywood should generate but rarely does; as it is, and despite the big-name cast, it feels pure indie. *The Ice Storm* doesn't try to please everybody, and as a result it probably will. You come away scoured, exhilarated, and saturated with the movie's life-stuff.

The time-capsule details of *The Ice Storm* are formidable: From the leisure suits to the *Fantastic Four* comics to the old-fashioned levered ice trays, it's a masterpiece of enthropological reincarnation. (Give it points, too, for the most convincing bong hit in film history.) What unfolds amid the martinis and *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* paperbacks is less a story than a multiple character study: the effable dad (Kevin Kline), equally bewildered by his affair with a trendy neighbor (Sigourney Weaver) and his slowly disintegrating family; the mom (Joan Allen), lost somewhere between girlhood and disillusionment; the rebellious daughter (Christina Ricci), experimenting with shoplifting and mock sex with the neighbor's boys (Elijah Wood and Adam Hann-Byrd); the sweet-natured son (Tobey Maguire), impressively grappling with puberty. The time is Thanksgiving weekend, 1973, when Watergate rages on TV and the worst ice storm in 30 years hits the East Coast, a metaphoric arena for the family's eventual rendezvous with tragedy.

The film's rhythm is distinctly novelistic, creating an effortless web of incident and cross-purposes that culminates, in more ways than one, with Kline and Allen's unhappy attendance at a suburban-roulette swingers' party. The key to *The Ice Storm*'s ambiguity and unexpected depth is that the events of the story mean wholly different things to different characters—there's no moral, just life sliced like a loaf of bread. What you'll remember are the lyrical moments, from Ricci impulsively donning a rubber Nixon mask for her first awkward dry-hump, to the awful silent slide of a boy's prone body down an ice-covered street.

Kline gets the first chance he's had to really act in more than a decade, and Allen another good shot at an Oscar. But from the moody opening of the night train spinning its wheels on the frozen track, it's Tobey Meguire's peaceful, pensive gaze that holds the movie together. You can't take your eyes off him.

As studies of social entropy go, *The Ice Storm* is a quiet riot compared to the sanity-shredding urban chaos of Matthew Harrison's ***Kicked in the Head*** and Salvatore Stabile's ***Gravesend***. Harrison, a die-hard indie moviehead who first made cult waves with his infamous short *Two Boneheads*, got Martin Scorsese to exec-produce this loopy, bughouse day-in-the-life of a New York schnook, Redmond (the riotously disjointed Kevin Corrigan), who finds himself jobless, homeless, and pestered by a bad-news uncle (James Woods), an unwanted girlfriend (Lili Taylor), a cranked friend (Michael Rapeport), and a troublesome cache of mob coke he can't seem to unload. Redmond's searching for something larger, of course, and maybe it's Meg (Linda Fiorentino), a boozy, snapdragon stewardess who endures Redmond as she might a demented dog. Filled with running gags and stalking the outskirts of Coen/Tarantino territory (I especially liked the Russian/English-dictionary-on-a-chain-wearing gangster firing off malapropisms like "What the hell in the fuck does that mean?"), *Kicked in the Head* is a giggly bender of a movie, staggering like a rummy with a bellyful of hootch through its paranoid landscape.

Gravesend, on the other hand, is the chilly autobiography of a slaughter. Shot on the fly when film-school dropout Stabile was only 19, his toe-to-toe psychodrama chronicles the worst night in the lives of four Brooklyn punks (residents of the small 'hood called Grave's End), a night that begins with the usual basement slumming and joint sucking, and ends in a stack of corpses. The little brother of *Laws of Gravity*, itself the little brother of Scorsese's *Mean Streets*, *Gravesend* feels like an authentic street story: hand-held camerawork, honest locations, crude natural lighting, a trio of unknown actors (Tony Tucci, Michael Parducci, Tom Malloy) who don't seem to be acting so much as living out an ignorant cultural nightmare.

One accidental killing sets the dominoes falling, and the journey includes making a deal to bury the body, holding up a convenience store to pay for the deal, inciting one rumble after another, and acquiring more bodies as they go. The situation's absurdity is not lost on Stabile, who utilizes Tarantino-esque irony, especially when Louis Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World" plays on the car radio. But for the most part, *Gravesend* is a rough-hewn, bilious, dead-real trip to Endsville, relieved occasionally by a desperate chuckle. ●



Gun crazy: Tony Tucci and Tom Malloy in *Gravesend*.



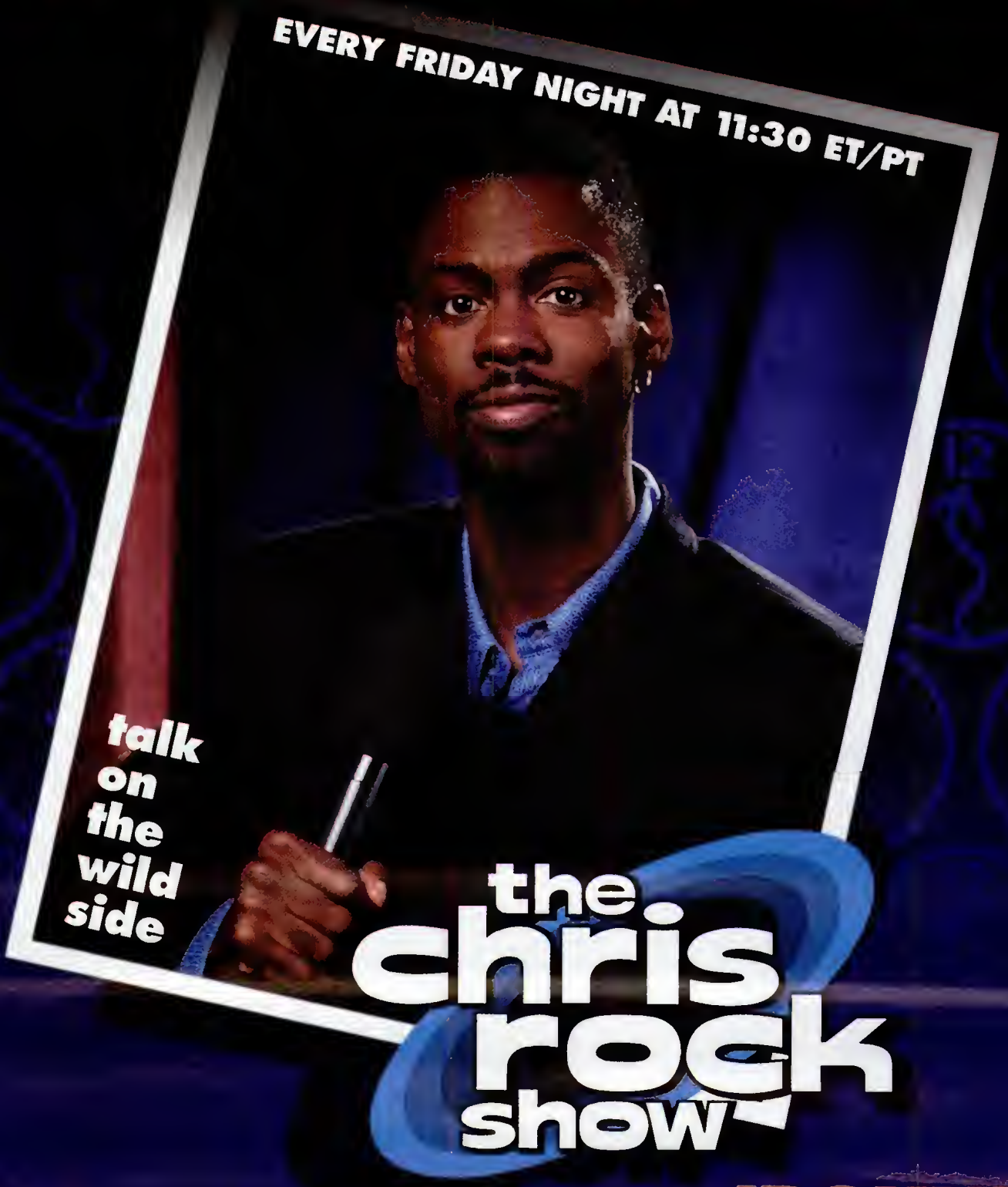
Chill factor: Christina Ricci ponders juvenile delinquency in *The Ice Storm*.



All in the family: James Woods in *Kicked in the Head*.


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The Theory of Everything

Don DeLillo shows—once again—that he is America's most relentlessly relevant writer.



BY DONALD ANTRIM

Boys crash the turnstiles and escape into bleachers. Jackie Gleason, Toots Shor, Frank Sinatra, and J. Edgar Hoover crowd together in the stands. Branca pitches and Thomson whacks his famous home run into the left-field seats. Cotter Martin, a kid skipping school, comes up with the ball. Leter, his father will take it from him and sell it on the street; the ball will have many owners. It is October 3, 1951, the day of the first Russian nuclear test, the day the New York Giants beat the Brooklyn Dodgers for the pennant, the beginning of Don DeLillo's spectaculer new novel, *Underworld*.

This is DeLillo's 11th in e distinguished series of books noted over the years for their beauty and intelligence and humor; noted, as well, for their consuming preoccupations with particular topics, themes, and systems of knowledge. Admirers of the earlier books will sometimes refer to them, like nicknemed friends, by their major subjects: the Football Book (*End Zone*), the Rock'n'Roll Book (*Greaf Jones Street*), the Math Book (*Ratner's Star*). *Underworld* might be the America in the Latter Half of the 20th Century Book. It is a large novel, more than 800 pages of cross-referenced narrative running a "layered and many-connected" course from the 1950s to the present, from the Polo Grounds to Bronx apartments to Truman Capote's Bleck-end-White Ball at the Plaza Hotel, a few miles south of the Bronx and just a few pages away from a student riot in Madison or a borrowed bedroom in Arizone, not ell that far from the Texas interstate where e girl videotapes e men shot end killed in his car.

One of the great pleasures of reading Don DeLillo is the feeling that the pleasures remain to some degree unnemeeble. This may be because DeLIllo does not reveal himself in accustomed ways; he certainly does not seem, in certein books, like *Rafner's Star* or *Libra*, to write auto-biographically in any usual sense—life remembered and recorded or reconstructed tomeke new drame end final epiphany. In DeLillo's work, epiphanies happen on every other pege, end meaning is invented on the spot. Here ere two footbell players chetting on the sidelines in *End Zone*:

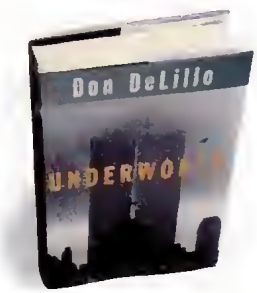
"I sensed knowledge in the football. I sensed a strange power and restfulness. The football possessed awareness. The football knew whaf was heppening. If knew. I'm sure of it."

"Are you serious, Bing?"

"The footbell knew thet this is e footbell geme. It knew fhef it wes the center of the geme. It wes eware of its own footbellness."

"But wes it ewere of its own ewereness? Thet's the ultimete test, you know."

It is es if the characters' dialogue forms a comical documentary of sensory life, the states of feeling end being that we so earnestly try, from time to time, to understand or at least talk about, and this gives the impression of a kind of euthorial deep thought. You might call this the DeLilloness of DeLillo; everyone—characters, author, reader—participates in the narrative as in a bewildering, book-length think tank on culture and its complex symbolism. I'll admit that many of my past conversations about DeLillo's work have sounded a lot like DeLillo's more droll dialogue chains. "Great book," I'll say about *White Noise* or *End Zone*. "Yes, it is, isn't it?" my friend will reply. Silence. There is confusion at some level—and this is exhilarating, very engaging—over what these books are about. The meth book is not truly about math; the football book isn't exactly about football. Aren't these books about modern loneliness and the Zapruder film and the questionable status of the individual, who can't possibly see the big picture but who can, at least in DeLillo's various worlds, hear rumors end feel weird? And what ere DeLillo's worlds if not approximations of our own—this everyday world where, in the words of e Russian waste disposal entrepreneur, near the close of *Underworld*, "nothing you can believe is not coming true."



One of many "subjects" tackled in *Underworld* is waste—sewage overflowing from ocean-going tankers, medical refuse littering alleyways in New York, old atomic bomb waste blown up by new atomic bombs buried together in Kazakhstan—and it is understood, of course, thet all this waste has a metaphorical function; in this case, waste is a metaphor for, well, more and more weste, a fact greatly appreciated by Nick Shay end his waste-menegement buddies. "Consume or die. Thet's the mendete of the culture. And it ell ends up in the dump. We meke stupendous emounts of garbage, then we react to it, not only technologically but in our hearts and minds. We let it shape us." This is Detwiler, a man who once filched J. Edgar Hoover's trash, lecturing Nick, *Underworld*'s chief human protagonist. Nick is a Bronx-born Irish-Italian with e felonious past, e brother in the military-industriel complex, and a wife and children in Phoenix, where he lives, es he likes to say, "like someone in the Witness Protection Program." Nick is also the present owner of the Spalding baseball—*Underworld*'s nonhuman protagonist—hit by Thomson in 1951. The baseball connects Nick to its pest owners, to fans at the Polo Grounds that October day. The basebell connects Nick to the FBI end Los Alamos and old lovers in the old neighborhood; it connects him to his time. Human interconnectedness, in fact, is the major preoccupation of *Underworld*. Other matters (Cold War history, philosophies of waste, etc.) are meaningful to the extent that they are occasions for connectedness—to this book, to each other, and, while reading *Underworld* (and probably long after), to Don DeLillo. The pleasures in reading DeLIllo seem mysterious because one is not always aware, right eway, how intimate an experience this is.

There is an especially beautiful passage early in *Underworld*. A man, driving along the expressway near Newark, sees "billboards for Hertz and Avis end Chevy Blazer, for Marlboro, Continental and Goodyear, end he reelized thet ell the things around him, the planes taking off end landing, the streaking cars, the tires on the cars, the cigarettes thet the drivers of the cars were dousing in their eshtrays—all these were on the billboards around him, systematically linked in some self-referring relationship thet had a kind of neurotic tightness, an inescapability, as if the billboards were generating reality." In *Underworld*, the metaphors edd up to reality. Or is it the other way eround? ●

TOP: SARA BARRETT.

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Please Don't Eat the Dandelions

Canned vegetables that are a must to avoid.

BY PAUL LUKAS

For better or worse, my food tastas haven't changed very much since I was a kid. I still love sweets and salty snacks, I still love big portions of meat, I still won't aat anything involving mayonnaisa, and—especially—I still don't like vegetables.

My aversion has led to its share of social difficulties, ranging from childhood fights with my parants to awkward moments with women. (It's a little weird to be sitting in a restaurant on a first date, saying, "Uh, do you want some of my asparagus? Or *all* of my asparagus?") But there are some vegetables I think I can be forgiven, perhaps even applauded, for disdaining.

Take, for example, mushy peas. These aren't peas that heve been accidentally overcooked, but rather *intentionally* mushy peas—Morton Supreme Quality Mushy Processed Peas (British Wholasale Imports, Inc.), to be precise, a product whose U.K. origins handily reinforce all the things wa've ever haard about the legendary failings of British cuisine. It's hard to tell if the photo on tha can is maant to induce nausea or if it's tha *result* of somebody's nausaa; in any case, it's hardly enticing.

Of coursa, tha Brits don't have a monopoly on unpalatabla foodstuffs—Amish culinary tradition, for instance, isn't exactly renowned for its gustatory charms, which may explain the extremely off-putting visaga of **John Cope's Fancy Evaporated White Sweet Corn** (John Cope's Food Products, Inc.), a Pennsylvania product that features a smiling Amish man on the labal. Corn is relatively inoffensive as vegetables go, but the brownish nubbins pictured on the John Cope's can don't rasemble any corn I've ever seen before—they look more like a bowl of maaly grual, or maybe bug larvaa. According to the label, "Tha corn is cut off and evaporated by [a] special process, resulting in a daliciously tasty flavor and a golden toasted color." Such hyperbola notwithstanding, even committed vegetarians would probably choose steak over this stuff.

Or maybe they'd prefar a can of Belle of Maina Fiddleheads (W.S. Wells & Son)—but I doubt it. This product was sent to ma by my pal Liz from Naw Hampshire, who thought I'd be interested in having a new vegatabla to loatha. Her letter explains that fiddleheads are "the unfurled shoots of fiddlahaad fern" and ara sold as a New England regional delicacy each spring. She says fiddlehead tradition dates back to Colonial times, when the ferns, which are rich in vitamin C, were eaten to stave off scurvy. Thase days we can gat our vitamin C from othar sources, which is fortunata indeed: Liz says fiddlahaads tasta "tha same as tha bottom of a hot lawn mower smells." It's also worth noting that the label on the can nimbly avoids tarms lika "dalicious" or "tasty"—the kindast description the manufacturer could coma up with, in fact, is that fiddlahaads are "an unusual vegatabla," a dead giveaway that you'ra better off proceeding directly to dessert.

The Belle of Maine folks are a bit more upfront about the taste of another item in their product line—canned dandelion greens. The label provides separate cooking instructions depending on whether the consumer prefers the product's "naturel bitterness" or "a milder bitterness," which is sort of like asking whethar you'd prefer to endure a second- or third-degree burn. Meanwhile, we're left to pondar why anyone would need to buy canned dandelions in the first place when the weeds are in bountiful supply on lawns across America.

I've saved the worst for last: mushrooms. Most people love tham, but there's something about tha spongy fungi that sends shivers up my spine. Mushrooms don't just grow, you see—they *encroach*, gobbling up everything in their path in a mad stampede to cover tha Earth and smother us all in tha process. You'll see tham the sama way whan you gat a load of Rose Red Goldan Mushrooms (King Hong Canned Food Co., Ltd.), a Taiwanese grocery item whosa label illustration depicts a few dozen rembunctious-looking mushrooms sprouting forth in all directions on stems that appear to be *several feet* long. These are the 'shrooms I've always dreaded—huge, growing in clusters, and aiming to invade my space.

There's an interesting common thread running through all five of these products: The ubiquitous "Serving Suggestion" notation is nowhere to be found naxt to tha photos on any of the cans. This seems to ba an implicit suggestion *not* to serve any of tham—a suggastion I'm happy to follow. And if you think I'm giving vegetablas a bum rap, consider this: I haven't even brought up lima beans yet.

(British Wholesale Imports, Inc., 5711 Corsa Ave., Westlaka Village, CA 91362; John Cope's Food Products, Inc., P.O. Box 419, Rheems, PA 17570; W.S. Wells & Son, P.O. Box 109, Wilton, ME 04294; King Hong Canned Food Co., Ltd., 567 Yuan-Sui Rd., 1 Sec. Yuan-Lin, Taiwan)

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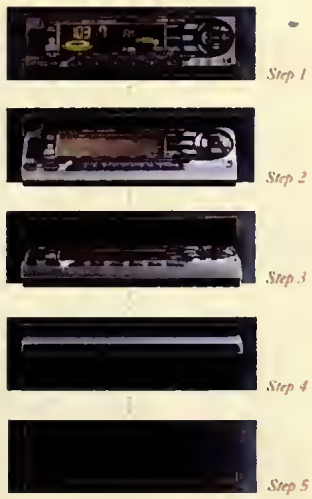


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Wired and Tired



High-tech product placement is now a staple of music industry conventions, but the omnipresent gadgetry at the second annual **Intel New York Music Festival**, held July 16–19, suggested a giant technological tail wagging a musical dog. Witness the futuristic trans-atlantic collaboration between Finland's Rinneradio, onstage at Manhattan's Knitting Factory, and New York's **DJ Spooky**, stationed at a club in Finland. As Rinneradio's ambient techno shot across the globe over ISDN lines, Spooky remixed it live; to the Intel audience's disappointment, though, Spooky's version was inaudible. The experiment ended up being just a "cyber" update of Phil Collins hopping the Concorde to hit two Live Aid stages in 1985.

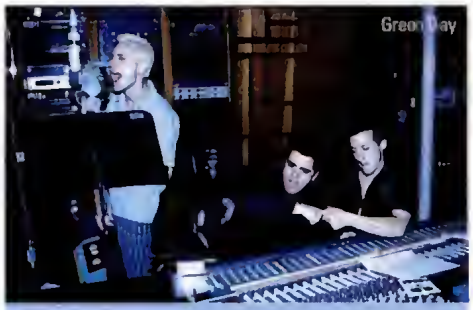
Promoting the idea that new technologies are revolutionizing both the way music is made *and* consumed, the Intel Fest was cantered around a vast Web site—the "Global Internet Gathering" (www.thegig.com)—which linked 20 participating NYC venues and provided cybercasts, chat rooms, and hookups with similar events worldwide, including the concurrent **Plug.In Conference**, a discussion of the convergence of new medie end music.

Organizers reported that the Web site received epproximately six million hits from an international audience of more than 125,000; in contrast, the flesh Fest corralled 10,000 registrants at $40 a pop. Filtering the festival through the Web was a novel way to deal with the sheer volume of concerts—**Girls Against Boys** and the **Offspring** were among the 320 participating bands—but cyberspace refused to cooperate. The site was plagued with connectivity problems, and on July 17, an employee error at Network Solutions, the government-appointed company that oversees domain names, effectively brought the Internet to a grinding halt for several hours—a scenario eerily similar to that commercial in which e guy high on Mug root beer and the O'Jays causes a major blackout.

As spectators watched blurry Internet video feeds in dingy clubs, it was apparent that the Intel Fest is a tribute to technology still too embryonic to shoulder the wired society its organizers had envisioned. Like its predecessor, the late New Music Seminar, the Intel Fest purports to expose industry types to adventurous music. In reality, the goal has shifted away from influ-encing *whet* music gets heard toward *how* (and through which sponsor's technology) it gets heerd.

"We're riding a new paradigm," says the Knitting Factory's Micheel Dorf, a coproducer of the festival. "The relevancy is going to be clear 15 to 20 years from now." Back in the here and now, though, e music festivel thet touts **Better Than Ezra** and **Combustible Edison** as major headliners suggests that what the Internet really needs is a steady supply of music *worth* sending around the world.

GREG MILNER



In the Studio

If **Green Day** frontman Billie Joe Armstrong has his way, drunk frat rats will sing along to "King for a Day" from his band's upcoming release *Nimrod*. "The idea is that they'll just think it's a punk song and not notice the lyrics are about dressing up like drag queens," he says, adding that songs on the album, which was recorded in L.A. with producer Rob Cavallo (*Dookie*), range from acoustic folk to "punk swing." "*Insomniac* had a one-track mind," Armstrong explains, "but let's just say we tested our boundaries this time around."... **Garbage** are camped out in Butch Vig's Madison, Wisconsin, studio to finish their as-yet-untitled second album in time for an early 1998 release. Apparently, singer Shirley Manson isn't too impressed by all the malls and dairy farms in the region. "It's like being trapped in the movie *Fargo* without the funny bits," she says.... Finally recov-ered from e bout of writer's block, **Pulp** are currently holed up in a London studio frantically trying to finish the follow-up to 1995's critically acclaimed *Different Cless*. Sightings of frontman and former scenester Jarvis Cocker, who used to appear regularly in the gossip pages of London tabloid *The Sun*, are so scarce that the paper recently offered a $1,000 reward to the first reader to send in a picture of the lanky dandy out on the town.



JULIA CHAPLIN

Etcetera



The **Squirrel Nut Zippers** were none too pleased when Wrigley's gum swiped their song "Bad Businessman" for a television commercial that featured frolicking chompers. According to Zippers frontman Tom Maxwell, Wrigley's offered the band $30,000 for permission to sample the hot-jazz number, but the Zippers turned it down. The band's lawyers have threatened to sue... **The Artist** (formerly known as the Artist Formerly Known as Prince) announced that he would one day like to release a single through **Ani DiFranco**'s stalwartly independent Righteous Babe Records. "Once I heard Ani was doing it all herself, that was it," says the Artist, who billed himself a major-label "slave" when he was under contract to Warner Bros. According to his spokeswoman, no deals have been signed yet... **The Fugees** are heading off to Jamaica to make a film loosely based on the 1972 Jimmy Cliff classic *The Harder They Come*. Vocalist **Lauryn Hill**, who just gave birth to a baby boy, has also written songs for an upcoming solo album that will be partly produced by bandmate **Wyclef Jean**... Potty-mouthed rappers the **Insane Clown Posse** recently signed a $3 million recording contract with Island Records, just weeks after the Disney-owned Hollywood Records recalled the duo's major-label debut, *The Great Milenko*, in reaction to a Disney boycott launched by the Southern Baptist Convention. Island will rerelease the album with three bonus songs Hollywood Records executives deemed too scandalous for the original.



JULIA CHAPLIN

On Tour

Ani DiFranco: October 18, Chicago; 10/19 Ann Arbor, MI; 10/21 Madison, WI; 10/24 Omaha, NE; 10/25 Denver; 10/26 Salt Lake City; 10/28 Reno, NV; 10/30 Grass Valley, CA.

Mary J. Blige/Bone Thugs-N-Harmony: September 21, Miami; 9/24 Denver; 9/26 Houston; October 1, Seattle; 10/4 Los Angeles; 10/5 Phoenix.

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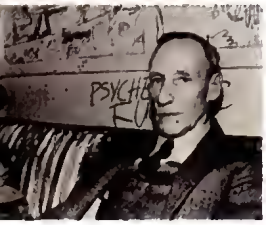


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The Priest, They Called Him: William S. Burroughs, 1914–1997



Why was the death of William S. Burroughs such a curiously uneventful event? Given the superficial resemblance to the recent passing of friend and fellow beat Allen Ginsberg, for example, the two deaths couldn't feel more different. Like Burroughs, Ginsberg was a writer well past his prime and a spotlight addict inclined to interlope on passing youth-culture movements in order to extend his legend. Nonetheless, Ginsberg remained a force to the end, an artist with a sincere political and spiritual agenda who saw his fame as a way to provoke cultural change. His death came as a suprisingly powerful blow, even to people who'd long since cringed at his poetry.

On the other hand, the 83-yeer-old Burroughs, who died of heart failure August 2, was an active relic who had exploited the mystique around his early work for so long that I suspect even he didn't know why he was famous anymore. While he continued to write, he was less an artist than a retiree who dabbled in his former craft. Despite the omnipresence of his name, he had ceased to participate in our world decades ago. He lived quietly in the middle of nowhere, invisible, apart from the occasional cameo, attached to us only by that famous visage and voice, and by the well-worn anecdotes and crackpot theories he respun endlessly for any interviewer willing to make the trek to Lawrence, Kansas.

Don't get me wrong: Burroughs was a profoundly important countercultural figure. Before heroin addiction stunted his talent, he wrote a handful of brilliant, groundbreaking novels, including *Naked Lunch* (1959) and *The Wild Boys* (1969). He perfected (but did not invent) the cut-up technique, one of the touchstones of postmodernism and an influence on innumerable writers, artists, directors, and musicians. He popularized the idea of experimental fiction, if more by dint of his persona than his craft. Along with Jean Genet, John Rechy, and Ginsberg, he helped make homosexuality seem cool and highbrow, providing gay liberation with a delicious edge. In his day, Burroughs was arguably the most radical novelist that America had ever produced.

But the rest of the Burroughs mystique—the gun toting, the conspiracy rantings, the heroin cheerleading— was pure showbiz. Not that he didn't sit in Orgone Boxes daydreaming of enlightenment, or do drugs into his 80s. But the mythic status of those oddball personal habits had everything to do with the contexts in which he was placed: To most of the rock bands, moviemakers, and Gen X advertisers who dropped Burroughs's trademark exterior into their product (notable exception: Gus Van Sant), he was a signifier of their own daring and little else. And in allowing this indiscriminate dispersal of his image, Burroughs the complex artist became Burroughs the simplistic icon.

In a way, Burroughs died in the late '70s, when he was resurrected from relative obscurity and repackaged as a kind of outlaw comedian/philosopher. Victor Bockris's 1981 book, *With William Burroughs: A Report from the Bunker*, a collection of transcribed dinner conversations and photos, presents him as a cranky, befuddled living legend who, when not putting on clownish displays of outré behavior, was propped up in front of a passing array of worshipful rock stars. It's a well-known secret that, beginning with his 1981 "comeback" novel *Cities of the Red Night*, Burroughs's prose was a product of partial ghostwriting, and that his involvement in his books steadily diminished. Perhaps this is not a bad thing in and of itself; everybody's got to pay the rent somehow. But the result is that his death feels abstract, only coldly fascinating. The Burroughs whom most of us know and love is an echo, which, thanks to the miracles of sampling, will continue unimpeded as long as there are young rebels in need of a transgressive figurehead. **DENNIS COOPER**



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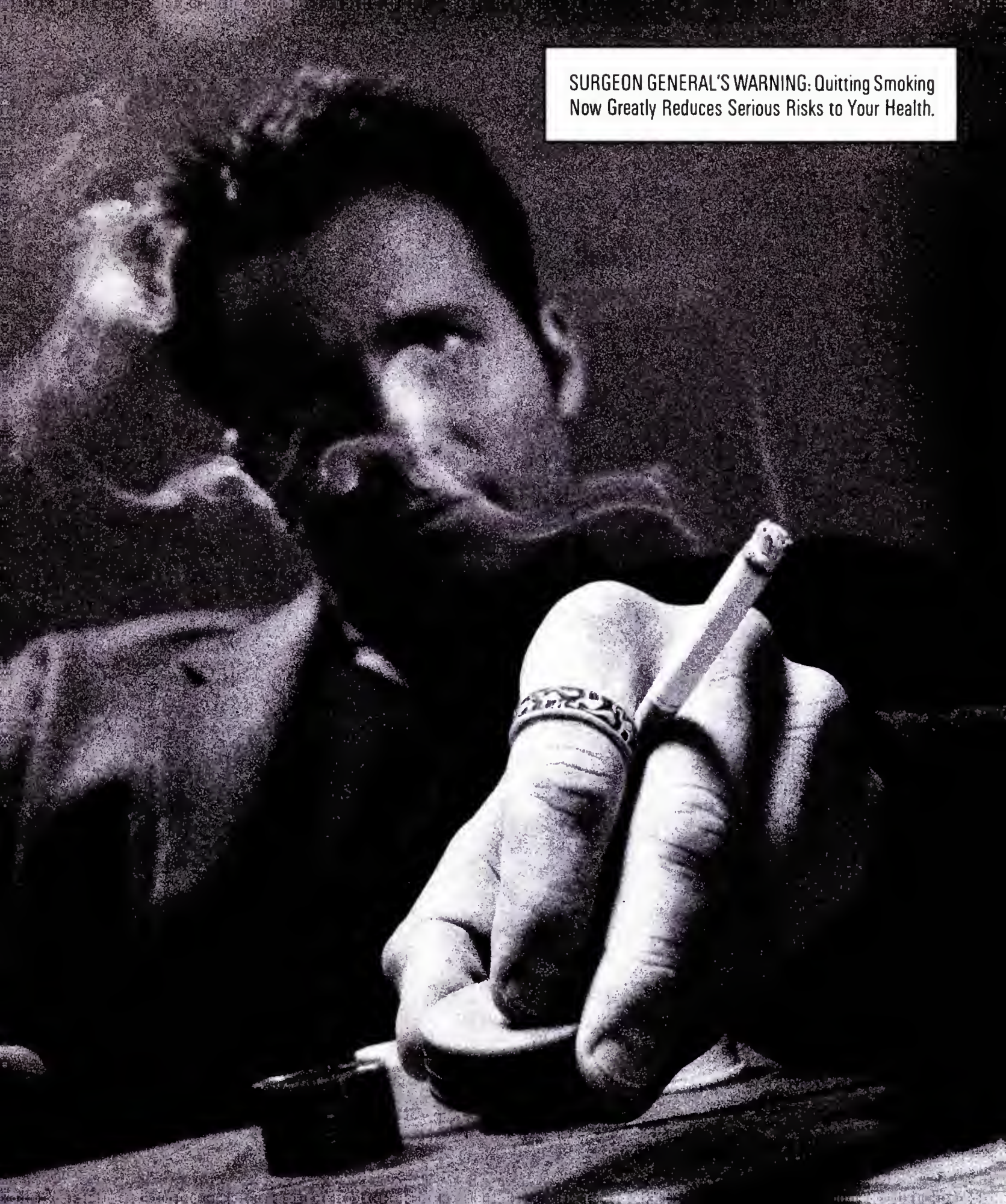
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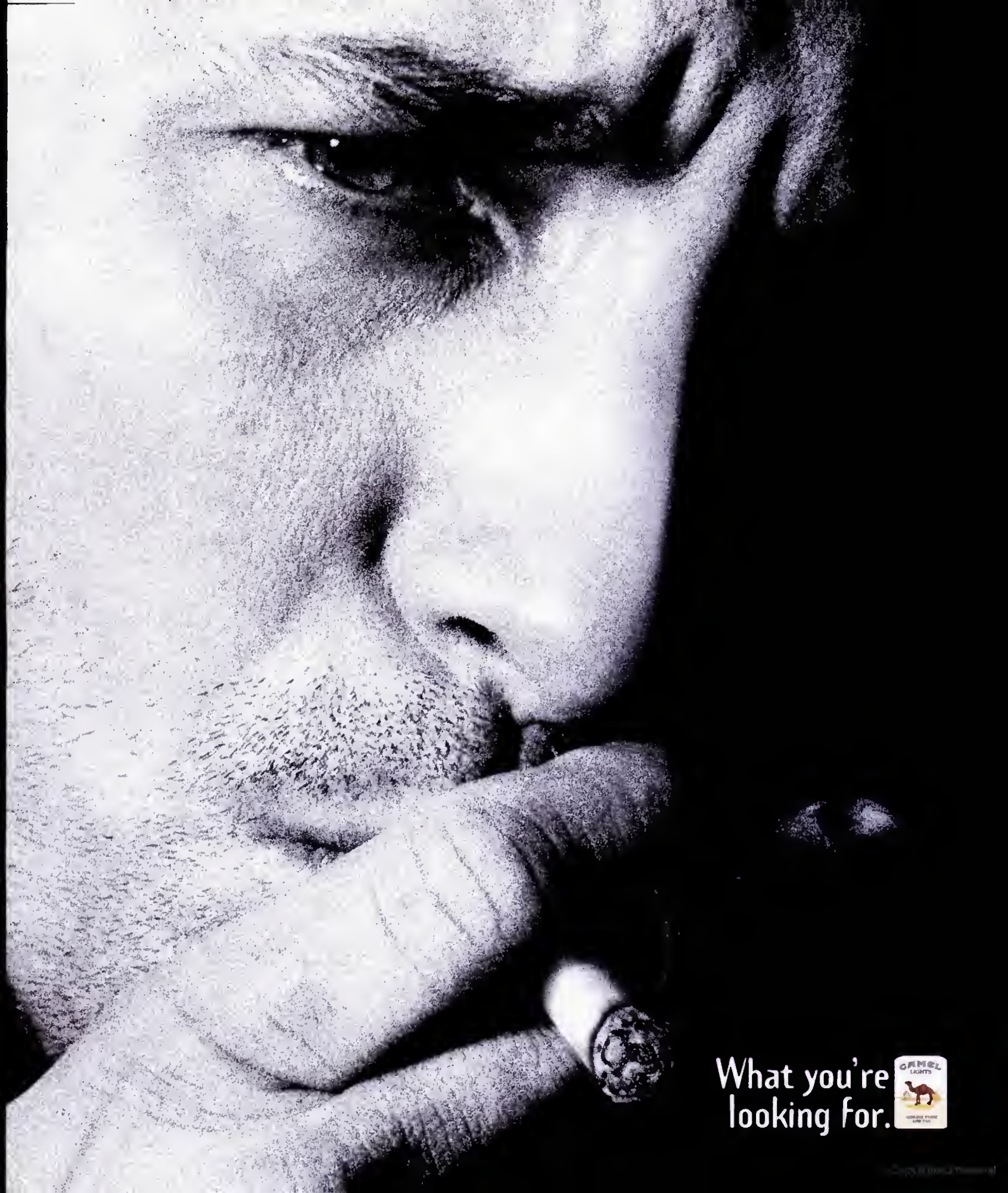
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Afro Poppa: Fela Kuti, 1938–1997

In the ennals of pop political activism, taking on TicketMaster or spoofing K Mart consumerism hardly compares to the cheeky dissidence of Nigerian superstar Fela Anikulapo Kuti, who died August 2 from AIDS-ralatad heart failure. He was 58. Harassed and vilified for his radical beliefs, the pot-smoking, saxophone-playing, gravel-voiced libertine was imprisoned more than a dozen times over the course of his career by a succession of civilian and military governments threatened by his Pan-African politics.

An equally potent musical force, the Nigerian-born Fela was immersed in jazz during his London school years, and brought it all back homa to Lagos in 1963. The son of a pianist/pastor and e feminist mother who was at the forefront of Nigerie's independence movemant, Fela fused post-bop jazz, James Brown funk, and West African highlife into a seemingly inimitable sound he modestly termed "Afro-beat." Inspired by the Black Panthers and the teachings of Malcolm X during e visit to the United States in 1969, Fela turnad performances with his 30-to-40-piace band Africa 70—later renamed Egypt 80—into lengthy excursions incorporating scathing diatribes, steam-engine grooves, rambling saxophone solos, and call-and-response vocals. Backed by colorful, scantily clad dancers, these otherworldly extravegenzes were comperable to those of Sun Ra's Arkestra and George Clinton's P-Funk.

Fala thought globally and reactad locally. "Go Slow," for example, urged Lagos homestaaders not to succumb to the country's highway system. The scope of his concerns widened during the '80s. Among his many acronymic titles, "V.I.P." (Vagabonds in Power) denounced expatriata African laaders who steal from their citizens from afar; "B.B.C." (Big Blind Country) condemned multinetionel corporata angorgamant. Other notabla jams included "Beasts of No Nation," "Colonial Mentality," and "Shuffering and Shmiling." Fela made music sharp enough to get under people's skin, as tha attention paid to him by Nigeria's authorities demonstrated all too well.



DAVID CORIO/RETNA

In 1977, during Fela's most infamous arrest, a thousand soldiers stormed his compound, the would-be autonomous zone he called the Kalakuta Republic. Beside burning down his house, tha sort of anlisted men ha'd cursed as "zombies" on a record releesed aarlier that year broke his hands, beat him into unconsciousness, end tossed his 77-year-old mother through an upstairs window. In 1984, a trumped-up charge of exporting foreign currency sent him to jail for 18 months. (His brother, Beko Ransome-Kuti, has been jailed for his political views since 1995.)

Most photographs find Fela iounging contentedly in bikini briefs, spliff in hand, amid the famala dancers with whom he lived. He merried his 27 wives in e traditional ceremony in 1978, but divorced them in 1986, claiming that "no man has the right to own e women's vegina." Although he was born into a privileged Yorube femily (his mother repleced the colonial name Ransoma with Anikulapo, or "he who carries death in e sack"), Fele aligned himself with the working class, whose complaints he expressed in pidgin-English lyrics deemed unsuitable for radio.

Fela's music finally began to filter West in the late '70s. The Brian Eno–produced no-waver James Chance cited the Nigerian as a big influence on his psychotic sound, and it's difficult to imagine the Talking Heads and Eno concocting tha multileveled grooves of *Remain in Light* without tha inspiration of Fele's dance party. Fela's music will apparently survive, if in diluted form; his son Femi has reportedly assumed control of Fela's band and compound. But don't expect Femi to fill those big bikini briefs any tima soon. **RICHARD GEHR**

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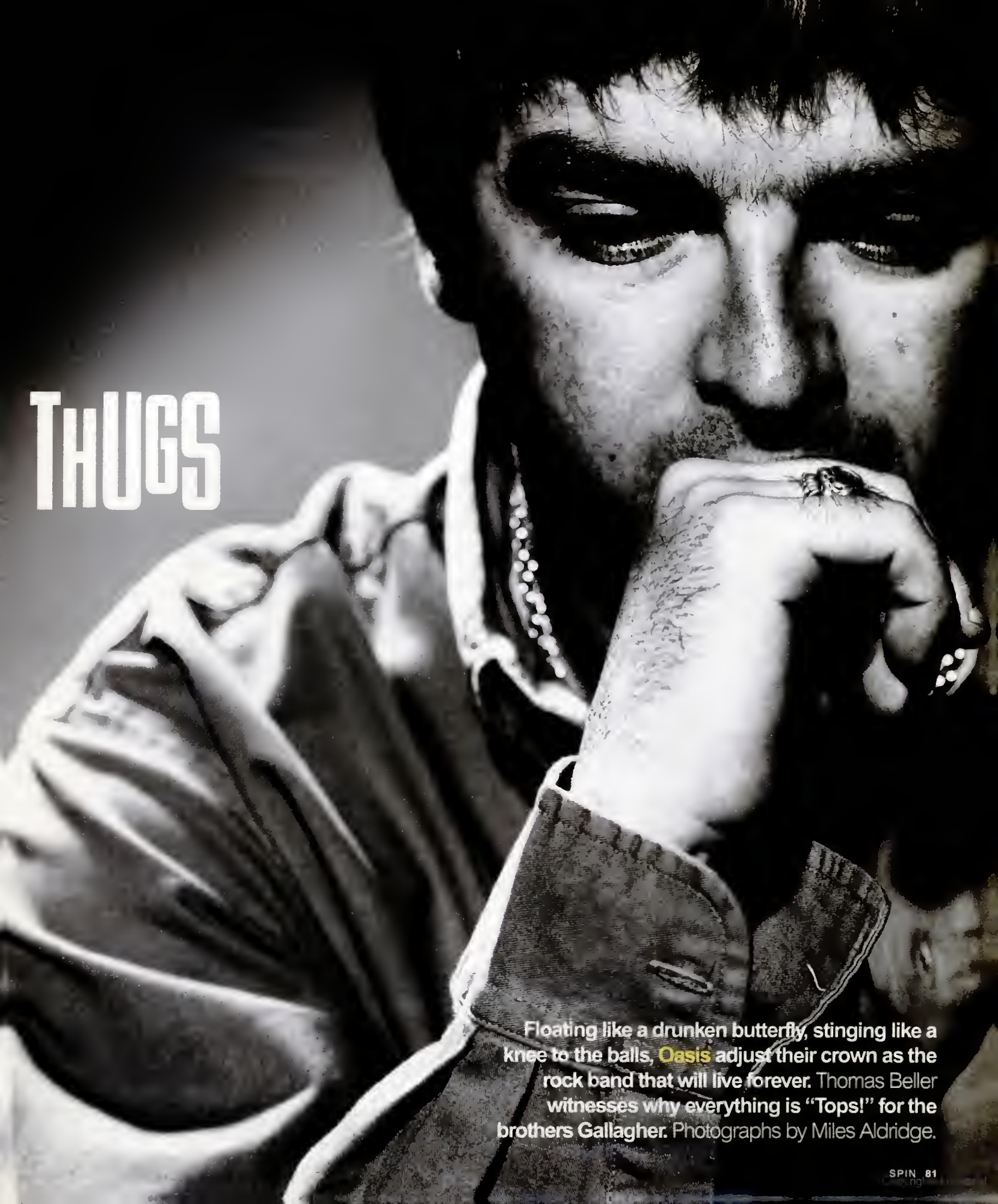
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AMONG THE

Behind black eyes: from left, Liam and Noel Gallagher.

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THUGS

Floating like a drunken butterfly, stinging like a knee to the balls, Oasis adjust their crown as the rock band that will live forever. Thomas Beller **witnesses why everything is "Tops!" for the brothers Gallagher.** Photographs by Miles Aldridge.

"I LOVE THAT

MAN A BITCH!" SHOUTS LIAM GALLAGHER. HE JUMPS OUT OF HIS CHAIR AND paces around the room in a small tight circle. "If anyone stepped on his toes, I'd cut them off!"

Liam sits down, and his voice becomes grave and somber. "I'd do time for 'im. I luv 'im. Me and 'im are cool. But..." and here he jumps up as though he'd just sat on a thumbtack, "We're brothers! And we get into terrible rows about, abou...eba...." His eyes are wide with terror and anger at not finding the word. "*Abba*! About *Abba*! We could get into terrible rows about anything! We could get into a row about a bun!"

Liam launches into a bit of mock dialogue, playing both himself and his brother/bandmate, Noel Gallegher:

"That's a bun."

"That's not a fook-king bun!"

"It's a *fook-king bun*!"

"Bun's never said anything to you, ya *coont*!"

He lets this last word ring out, then deflates back into himself. His wide and menacing blue eyes, touched up by some *Clockwork Orange*–ish eyeliner, become hooded again.

"It's not changed. I love my family. I love my friend over there [Denny, the bodyguard, whose huge round face is blushing]. And I'm starting to dig you."

Oasis's sound is not particularly groundbreaking—dense, structured rock music with staggeringly catchy riffs—but their vibe is. Amid this rather prudent, health-conscious decade of non-ostentation, Oasis have revived the grand rock tradition of hedonism and bad behavior ("Drugs are like getting up and having a cup of tea in the morning," Noel has declared; when I asked if he smoked pot, he said, "We're just into beer and various powders"). There is no apologetic recovery-speak with Oasis; why take 12 steps when one big one will do? Their songs convey the same brash attitude. "All your dreams are made / When you're chained to the mirror and the razor blade," is an unusually dark comment on drug use. More common is, "You could wait for a lifetime / To spend your days in the sunshine / You might as well do the white line / 'Cause when it comes on top...You've got to make it happen!" (The exclamation point is in the official lyrics.)

The twist is that although Oasis's music is rebelliously swaggering, their ethos in general is of a rather life-affirming nature. "Mad for it" is the band's rallying cry. "You gotta roll with it... You gotta say what you say / Don't let anybody get in your way." Even the song titles implore and exhort—"Live Forever," "Alive," "Supersonic" ("I'm feeling supersonic / Give me gin and tonic / You can have it all / But how much do you want it?").

The songs come from the mind of Noel Gallegher, 30, and they issue from the mouth of Liam, his junior by five years, but his senior in number of newspaper and magazine covers, number of fights picked, and number of insults hurled and received. Their first album, *Definitely Maybe*, featured the brilliant single "Live Forever," and a lot of other songs that featured brilliantly familiar riffs—"Cigarettes & Alcohol," a dead ringer for T. Rex's "Bang a Gong"; cops from the Beatles, circa *Revolver* and *Rubber Soul*, abounded. The follow-up, *(What's the Story) Morning Glory*, was filled with even better songs, but its buzz centered largely on the parochial skirmish with fellow Britpoppers Blur, who at the time were a greater commercial presence. Blur are eccentric pop artists; their homage to working-class England, *Parklife*, was a smash and single-handedly put Britpop on the map, but it was, nevertheless, ironic. Oasis, on the other hand, were brash, working-class louts, uninhibited by decorum, good taste, or irony. They brawled and boozed and snorted (cocaine being the drug of choice in post–acid house England) their way to the status of massive generational icons (in Europe, *Morning Glory* sold nine million). In America (where it sold more than 3.5 million), the album's semi–power ballad "Wonderwall" drifted coyly out of supermarket speakers everywhere. Now, having nearly combusted with drink and drugs and, most of all, the tempestuous relationship between the Gallegher brothers, they've completed their third album, which possesses this year's pithy Oasis exhortation as its title: *Be Here Now*. Everything they do wrong turns out to be something they do right.

"I have learned to *stop* doing this," says Liam, holding his hand in a backwards peace sign, the British version of flipping the bird. "I stopped doing this because the people I was telling to fuck off were the great fucking public! You know what I mean? So I don't do it anymore. I just sort of laugh, and wave, 'Hello England! Hello public!' and then a swift kick in the shin to the photographer."

Liam mimes a vicious kick, as though the photographer's shin were a soccer ball. Then he sits back down. "I'm young," he says, "but I'm learning."

Here is a generalization one can comfortably make about Noel and Liam Gallagher, the odd couple who compose, respectively, the brains and the brawn of Oasis: Noel does not like to fight, Liam does.

"I've got Muhammad in me, man. Muhammad Ali," says Liam. "I was watching *When We Were Kings* the other day, and he just jumped in me, man. I've got a bit of Lennon and all that, and now I've got a bit of Ali. I've got two loudmouth arrogant bastards living inside me. I like to think so anyway. It's good for me ego."

He stands up again, and begins to move around as though in a boxing ring, hunched up, throwing jabs and roundhouse punches.

Can you really fight?

"I can fucking do that, yeah. When I'm not pissed."

And when you're pissed?

"I get me head kicked in."

Danny, the bodyguard, trails Liam Gallagher into the Sony Studios on Manhattan's West 54th Street for our interview, which strikes me as a little odd. A manager or a publicist maybe, someone to make sure Liam doesn't say the wrong thing. But the significant contingent of people who have a vested interest in Oasis long ago gave up on containing what Liam says. So the next best thing is trying to contain what he does. Thus: Denny.

For security reasons, I was informed, Oasis could not be interviewed all at once. For the security of Oasis, that is. Apparently, if Noel and Liam Gallegher share the company of a journalist, there is too high a probability that they will inflict some kind of physical or psychic damage on each other.

First come Alan White, Paul "Guigs" McGuigan, and Paul "Bonehead" Arthurs—drums, bass, and rhythm guitar, respectively—the three members of Oasis you've never heard of. They are roly-poly, bemused, and all clutching beer bottles. In fact, they look as though they have been clutching beer bottles since the moment they rolled out of bed; except for Bonehead, the band jester, whose alcohol suntan suggests he rolled out of bed with a beer bottle clenched between his teeth.

McGuigan, the bassist, left an Oasis tour in 1995 due to what a press release described as nervous exhaustion. Arthurs generously summarizes: "He had a crispy."

Oasis tours are rumored to be blizzards of substance abuse and insults, and I ask if any of this contributed to McGuigan's bout with nervous exhaustion.

"Nope," he says, and nibbles on one of his fingers. Each and every member of Oasis, I am to learn, is a chronic nail-biter.

What happened on that tour?

"The plot got lost," McGuigan says softly. "Then it got found." Oasis are all British football fanatics, but McGuigan was the one with the ability, rumored to have a shot at the pros, if not for drink and drugs; he's working on a book, *The Greatest Footballer You Never Saw*, about a great talent of the '70s who burned himself out on the hard stuff, and died young. Within every biography is an autobiography.

"But there was never any chance that Guigs would actually leave the band," interjects Arthurs, in a rare moment of sincerity. "And besides, the guy who we got to replace Guigs had a crispy himself!"

White sits quiet most of the time. He is the band's second drummer. The first, Tony McCarroll, was ejected due to "personality differences" with Noel Gallagher, though the fistfight he got into with Liam at a Paris strip club didn't help. He is suing the band, and, demonstrating a firm grasp on Oasis mythology, has hired Pete Best's lawyer.

The trio eventually leaves, and their absence is followed by the calm before the storm, or, more specifically, before Liam. The band's American publicist, a young woman who up to this point had seemed reasonably coherent, sticks her head in the room and announces excitedly, "Liam is in the building!" Fifteen min-



They, Ye[illegible]ough you: Liam and Noel slouch [illegible] smokes not optional.



Boys don't cry: from left, Paul "Guigs" McGuigan, Alan White, Noel Gallagher, and Paul "Bonehead" Arthurs.

utes later she looks ashen, a decade older, in need of vitamins and rest. "Liam is in a *good mood*," she hisses.

Liam Gallagher struts into the room kicking his feet out to the side with each step, as though each foot wants to go in a different direction. He's wearing suede Hush Puppies, brown pants, and a tan, square-shouldered jacket with lots of gold buttons, very military in a 19th-century way (or very Beatles in a *Sgt. Pepper's* kind of way). His fingers are ornamented with gold rings—collectively, they give the appearance of brass knuckles.

We shake hands.

"Fuckin' big hands! You ought to be a goalie," he says. Turning to Danny, who has ambled in like an enormous puppy, he adds, "Fuckin' big 'ands on this one."

Liam's hair is short and in a bit of a bowl cut, and his face is clean-shaven and unblemished. Often, Liam can look like an unwashed mechanic with a nose-hair problem; at other times he looks sublime and hauntingly beautiful. Today, it's the latter. He slouches deep into his chair and stares blankly. If my face were a television screen, he'd be reaching for the clicker.

"You're looking great," I sputter lamely.

"You're not looking bad yourself," he snaps back, "but I'm married." He casts a leering glance at Danny, who smiles nervously.

Liam's marriage to Patsy Kensit (who can be summarized as a sort of British Pamela Anderson Lee, which you can take as you wish) was a huge media sensation in England, but almost everything Liam does is a huge media sensation in England. This is true of Noel as well, but to a lesser extent; Noel is genuinely more low-key—his recent marriage to his longtime girlfriend took place unannounced in Las Vegas.

Liam has fiercely avoided press interviews during the ascent of Oasis (Liam does the singing, Noel the talking), but Liam's absence, his persistence in saying "fuck off" anytime anyone tries to pose a question or snap his picture, has only enhanced his appeal. Whereas most bands create press opportunities to sell records, the British press has, for the past year, used any possible excuse to run Liam's picture to sell newspapers.

August 27, 1996, is a fine example. It was not a slow news day. The Prince and Princess of Wales were having their divorce finalized; a gang of Iraqi terrorists had hijacked a Sudanese airplane and were landing it in on British soil; the Prison Service announced that the prison system had freed several hundred criminals by mistake. Yet the headline story of the day was that Liam Gallagher had, 15 minutes before Oasis's plane was scheduled to depart for an American tour, muttered something about not having a place to live with Patsy, jumped into a taxi, and went home. This was front-page, above-the-fold news.

The recent resurgence of energy and optimism in England is being fueled not by the snotty, aristocratic culture for which the country is generally known but by its cheeky, working-class youth. The most prominent figures to emerge this decade in fashion, literature, and art (Alexander McQueen, Irvine Welsh, and Damien Hirst, respectively) are all as likely to tell you to piss off as they are to offer you some tea. Oasis are the embodiment of all this. They are England's national band, a cultural phenomenon to be cited in the same breath as the Tory party relinquishing its grasp to Tony Blair and New Labour. Last summer Oasis played two sold-out shows at Knebworth—a sort of one-band British Woodstock. An estimated five percent of the population tried to purchase tickets.

OASIS ARE ENGLAND'S NATIONAL BAND, THE EMBODIMENT OF CHEEKY, WORKING-CLASS YOUTH.

Of course, they are also "big in America." But you have to use quotes, because in America, where rock sales are flat as a Nebraska highway, the record industry can only hope that *Be Here Now* will be massive.

I ask how New York has been treating Liam since he arrived last night. "Fuckking great! New York people are fuck-king rrrockingl" He rolls the "r" like Tony the Tiger in the Frosted Flakes commercial. He continues: "Got into town last night and saw Radiohead. Boring bunch of fuck-king stoodents, I'll kick their fuckin' heads in, man, because they're dicks." His accent is swampy, the aural equivalent of lots of weird twisted trees rising out of a bog.

"I liked your new record quite a bit," I say.

"You liked it quite a bit?" replies Liam incredulously. "What do you mean you

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liked it *quite* a *bit*?" Suddenly enraged, he stands up and heads for the door. "See ya later, man." He looks at Danny, who is nervously hoisting his girth off the couch. Reaching the doorway, Liam turns and shouts, "You've got big fucking hands, man, but I'll knee you in the *balls*, man! Whaddya mean you liked it quite a bit? It's tops, man. *Tops*!"

I did not know then that exactly one week later, backstage in Oakland, no less a personage than U2's Bono would be subjected to similar, if less threatening, treatment. Liam will tell Bono how great Oasis's record is while it blasts on U2's dressing-room stereo. He will clutch Bono's shoulders and insist that he sing along. Bono does. He sings: "All my people right here, right now / D'you know what I mean?"

The band will open two nights for U2 in Oakland, the first shows they've played in nearly ten months.





Play on, players: from left, Liam smooches Noel; at the Brit Awards, Patsy Kensit and Liam; Noel and wife Meg; Liam and Blur's Damon Albarn kick up dust.

"I dig U2, ya know, but I don't give a shit about all that fancy fucking stage crap. It's bollocks, man, it's like you don't believe in your music enough," Liam says now. "There's nothing better than five lads on stage, or four lads...or 25 lesbians, just doing the bit, 'cause you get sidetracked and you end up not watching the show with that million-pound fucking lemon in the air."

Onstage, Oasis are almost surreally minimal in their performances. They stand there. They play their music. They ignore one another. Onstage theatricality for Oasis usually consists of Liam Gallagher walking away from the microphone to get a beer, or crouching down to get a better look at the people up front.

This doesn't work so well in America, but in England it works incredibly well. There is something compressed and contained in this presentation, some element of menace in the stillness. People who saw them at their now-legendary pub shows in Camden when they were just starting out say their stage demeanor has not changed a bit.

Perhaps the single most intense live music moment I ever witnessed involved

FOOTBALL HOOLIGANS ARE HUGE OASIS FANS. OASIS THEMSELVES ARE HOOLIGANS.

Liam's bad mood: 1995, London's Earl's Court, where most of the 20,000 fans were jumping frantically up and down in one massive pogo-stick orgy, while singing along to all the songs. American rock shows have their waves of moshing and crowd surfing, but England has a different energy, which I only came to understand after seeing a British football match. The British are better at, and more enthusiastic about, submerging their individuality into the collective mob. They sing together, they chant together, they riot together. And football hooligans are huge Oasis fans. Oasis themselves are football hooligans. Liam is sort of a football hooligan superman. In fact, Oasis hail from the city responsible for the most murderous, riotous football hooligans of all—Manchester.

Which brings me back to Earl's Court, where the band rocked in that standstill, nonemotive manner, from one song to the next. Above the stage hung an enormous video monitor, broadcasting close-ups of the various members. And toward the end, there was a close-up of Liam's face. The band had just finished a song, and he was not singing. His face showed no expression. None. He simply stared with that weird killer expression lurking beneath the blankness, a mass-murdering sort of look, and as the camera stayed on his face, and his face remained impassive, a roar welled up from the audience. The man was not moving a muscle, not so much as a twitch of an eyelid, and the place was going wild.

"That's the best guitar in the world," says Noel Gallagher. "It's not one of the best guitars, it's *the* best guitar."

He is wearing brown pants, a baggy, white, button-down shirt with brown buttons, and tan suede Hush Puppies. His feet are tiny ("I'm an 8," says Liam, "but he's a 6. Don't know how he stands up sometimes"). In person, Noel looks more boyish, less moody and adult, than he does in photos. His face has a peculiar flat aspect to it, as though it were a bust that some avid fan had molded for her high school art project.





Noel is standing in the Gibson Artist Relations Showroom in midtown Manhattan, which could just as well be called the Artists Protection Program; its explicit purpose is to allow the likes of Noel Gallagher to fiddle with guitars without the distraction of some 12-year-old plugging into a Marshall. The guitar Noel speaks of is his own—a Les Paul Florentine Diamond Sparkle. It sits in its open case like a diamond in a jewel box, and Noel stares down at it lovingly. It's covered in bright silver glitter. The guitar costs $3,590, but you can't buy one. It's custom made.

"The thing about that guitar is it's got that extra...You know what I mean? When you've got everything turned all the way up, this one gives you more. It goes to '11'."

Noel Gallagher wants more. And he can't be bothered if he sounds a bit like *Spinal Tap*. He peruses various guitars, all with detached interest, an amused gleam in his eye. The thing about Noel is that there is almost always an amused gleam in his eye, which he extinguishes only when he writes his remarkably sincere songs (of which there are many, including a raft of top B sides).

An artist's rep with a pompedour and a Southern accent thrusts a Gibson catalog into his hands; it features a new model, "The Noel Gallagher Super Nova." Noel stares at it for a moment before commenting, "That's not the color I wanted. They said they couldn't do the color I wanted." Then he looks up and his eyes fall upon a turquoise guitar hanging in the corner. "That's it!" he says. "That's the color of my team, Manchester City Football Club."

Business completed, we pile into an elevator. Noel turns to me and asks if I've seen any good movies lately. As it happens I saw a French movie the previous evening, *La Promesse*, and this strikes me as unfortunate. Noel Gallagher does not seem like the sort of person who enjoys subtitles.

"Fucking stoodent," he mutters with an impish grin.

So you're not the sensitive type?

"Well, I don't consider myself to be in the same mold as Michael Stipe. He's like, 'Oh, God, man, I suffer for my art!' And I'm like, 'Oh fuck off! Go and suffer somewhere else, but don't do it on fucking MTV when I got to watch you, ya cunt.'" It's hard to tell which is the more derogatory term in Oasis's lexicon—*cunt* or *student*.

Back in the plush interior of Noel's hotel lobby, I ask how he feels about *Be Here Now*'s prospects in America. "In England, we're the biggest band since the Beatles. I'm not saying we're better than the Beatles, but everything we do in England is considered an anticlimax, because everybody puts too much importance on it. I'm like, why can't we just be a normal fuckin' band?"

Because you're Oasis, ya stupid moron, I want to say, but the bodyguard lurks nearby.

FROM LEFT: RETNA; D. RABAN/ALL ACTION/RETNA; D. RABAN/ALL ACTION/RETNA; CHAMBURY/ALPHA



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Oasis always seemed to be about being massive, I say. Bigness is part of it.

"But that's it, you see. When the last came out of the speakers at Knebworth, that was the end of an era for us. We achieved everything that we ever set out to be—to play the biggest gigs, to sell the most records, to write the best songs, and we've done that. But it's too much pressure, them big gigs. it's too much pressure to fuck it up. What if you got a hangover when you're playing to 125,000 people?"

Did you have a hangover?

"Second day we did. The first day we were all in bed early."

The opening act at Knebworth was the Chemical Brothers, and though their sound could not seem, at first listen, more removed from Oasis, their collaboration with Noel, "Setting Sun," went to No. 1 in England. For all its acidic techno atmosphere, the song had a distinctly Gallagher-esque touch—a winking nod to the Beatles' "Tomorrow Never Knows."





Rock's perks: from left, Noel and his Rolls; the happy Gallagher family with brother Paul and mom; Liam and Noel's continuing hi-jinks; Noel basks in the adoring teen glow.

Theft is something of a recurring theme in Noel Gallagher's songwriting, a form of high camp beneath the sincere surface. "Step Out," a terrific B side, is credited to Noel, Stevie Wonder, and members of Thin Lizzy, who contributed unwittingly to the song's composition. On Oasis's new single, "D'You Know What I Mean," Noel manages to cram thefts from three separate songs into three lines: "The blood on the trax must be mine / The fool on the hill and I feel fine / Don't look back cos you know what you might see."

"I used to pinch anything when I was younger," says Noel. "I once got caught pinching a frozen chicken. We were having the local disco, and I had a date, but I had no money, so I decided to pinch the most expensive thing on my mother's shopping list and keep the money, which was the chicken. But I ended up getting arrested for it, getting fined 75 pounds.... Shoplifting is a rebellion, isn't it? I suppose it's, uh, you get off on the danger. You progress to cars, and then you progress to serious alcohol and drug abuse. Then you start a band and pinch other people's songs. I'm a kind of artistic shoplifter."

The image of Noel sneaking around a supermarket with a huge frozen chicken bulging out of his coat is rather comic, but the Gallagher family story begins in humble and not particularly amusing circumstances. The parents split up when Noel was 17; his mother worked for a local bakery.

On the subject of his family relations he is terse, but not particularly harsh. "Me mum divorced me dad so we all left with me mum instead of me dad because we didn't like 'im. I haven't seen him since." Noel sips his black coffee. "I used to go to football matches with 'im. I went to my first football match in 1971, Manchester City versus Newcastle United. Man City won 5–1. We were standing in the Kippax Road stand, and at the end of it was a ledge where all the dads used to put all the kids. I used to sit on that ledge with all the little boys and that."

Liam's summation of his parents split, which occurred when he was 12, is still feverish with anger. "I love me mum, and me mum loves us, but I don't give a shit about the other cunt. We last spoke about two years ago, in Dublin. I said I'd smash his fucking head if he didn't get out of me face. He was there with a tabloid paper, *News of the World*. Trying to sell a story. I just said, 'We don't like ya, we don't want to fuckin' know ya.' He's a bad man. He used to beat her up. She didn't fight, he fought. She's not a fighter, she's a lover. Next question."

It is a time of peace in the world of Oasis. After the blow-out in the summer of 1996, the band took several months off and then recorded their new album at a leisurely pace.

"It's calmer all around," says Jill Furmanovsky, a photographer who has traveled extensively with the band, snapping pictures of them on tour and in the studio (this fall she's publishing a collection of Oasis photos called *Was There Then*). "Nobody can be bothered by the little things now that they've been through that canceled tour. There was some sort of watershed at Abbey Road [where the band recorded most of *Be Here Now*]. Noel and Liam repaired the rift, and ever since then they have been much easier on each other."

Says Noel, "Liam not coming on the plane [for the '96 American tour], any other band would have not bothered coming in the first place. But we have two singers in the band, two frontmen. He didn't get on the plane for whatever reason. I don't know what bullshit reason he ended up giving, but I know it was bullshit. It's like, if 'The Kid' doesn't want to come, 'The Kid' doesn't have to come. I'm more than capable of fronting this band if he doesn't want to do it."

He pauses for another sip of coffee. I refrain from pointing out that when Noel fronted the band on MTV's *Unplugged*, his brother's absence was glaring.

"I'd rather Liam do it, though."

Why?





"Because I become a better guitar player when I'm just left to play guitar. I don't think I could ever front a band, to be quite honest. I'd rather he come along and fucking do what he's paid for than sit on his ass whinging about not having anywhere to live, when that's not true. But there you go, that's what makes Oasis Oasis!"

Though every note and every word of every Oasis song (notwithstanding the ones cribbed from other musicians) are written by Noel, an Oasis song is more than the sum of Noel's parts. It must be at least strange, and perhaps terribly galling, that the enzyme by which his songs achieve their full stature belongs not to him but to his delinquent younger brother Liam.

Liam, for his part, downplays this detail as much as Noel does and, in a fit of humility, interrupts me when I refer to him as the band's frontman. "No!" he said, "I'm not a frontman, no. Noel is more of a frontman than me. I'm just a *sing-gah*. 'Cause I got a good beak."

Hearing Noel and Liam in such agreement, I feel a bit sad that they couldn't have been together in the same room to share the moment. But perhaps if they had been in the same room, they might not have been in agreement. Their squabbling is compulsive, and notorious, and entertaining—at least enough of the British public thought so to turn a 14-minute recording of one of their squabbles, recorded by a journalist and titled "Wibbling Rivalry," into a top 40 hit.

"I ONCE GOT CAUGHT PINCHING A FROZEN CHICKEN," SAYS NOEL. "I GOT ARRESTED FOR IT."

Each brother's attempt at speech is interrupted by long operatic chants of

LEFT TO RIGHT, DAVID FISHER/LONDON FEATURES; PAUL SLATTERY/RETNA; KEVIN CUMMINS/LONDON FEATURES; PAUL SLATTERY/RETNA.

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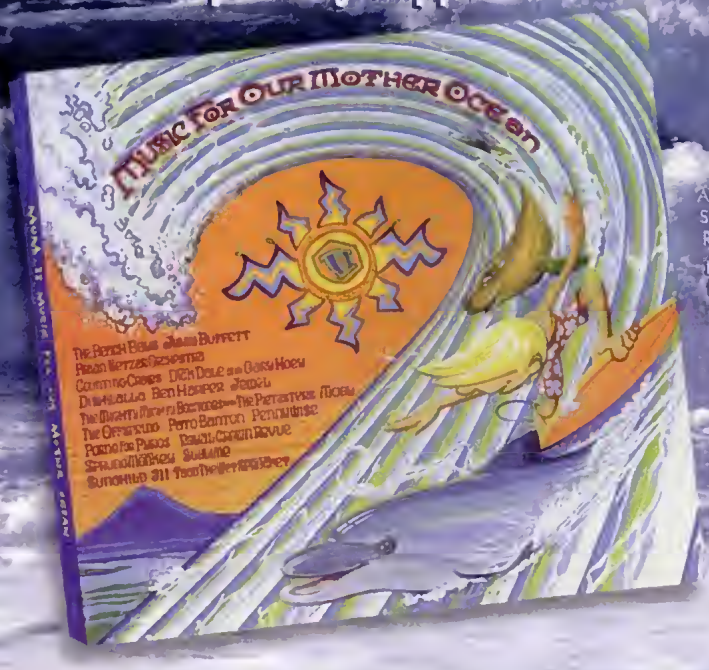
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"Bullshit!" and "Shut the fuck up!" repeated like a broken record of familial exasperation. Besides the bilious comedy, the tape contains some interesting philosophical points. Liam proposes that getting wasted and deported and led off in handcuffs is generally in the spirit of rock'n'roll, and Noel counters with the idea that rock'n'roll is about music.

"I never write in the third person," Noel tells me. "It's never he-said-she-said. It's you-and-me." This sounds romantic in a "Wonderwall" sort of way until you've heard Noel screaming at Liam, "Fuck you, you prick!"

It's tough playing to a half-empty house, but there is some consolation if the house you're playing holds 60,000 people. It's been a beautiful day in Oakland, and now, in the cool blue dusk, the crowd upfront is getting seriously pumped.

As usual, Oasis are immobile. Arthurs is, for reasons no one can fathom, the recipient of the most underwear thrown onstage. It gets thrown at him, and when he accumulates enough, he drapes it over his amp. This only happens in America, and the band is, as a whole, baffled by the ritual of "throwing knickers." McGuigan stands stock-still—by comparison, Bill Wyman was an acrobat. Noel, also, stands relatively still, in a white shirt with little brown buttons, and square, steel-rimmed sunglasses. The Silver Sparkle guitar is in fine form, indeed going to "11."

And then there is Liam. He, too, is wearing sunglasses. He looks a bit pale, but by his standards, is energetic. His body contorts a little as he sneers, head tilted upward, as though he were a man dying of thirst and little drops of water were rolling off the mike. Even from 40 feet, one sees his sneer. One can certainly hear it. It is the Oasis trademark.

The band launches into "Be Here Now" from the new album, and it sounds majestic. It strikes me how much this rendition sounds like the recorded version. Stadiums are an intrinsically ironic venue, and Oasis are an intrinsically ironic band. So they are well-suited. But then it strikes me that the record was, in a sense, recorded to sound like a stadium.

Afterwards I am escorted backstage. After a long trek across an expanse of concrete, there is an elevator. And at last I am ushered into the Oasis sanctum, a full floor away from where U2 are holed up. And then I am ushered out.

"Going down to see the show," says Noel. "Meet you back here after." So out I go to see U2. Midway through the set Bono pauses to make a speech. He describes how frightened U2 have become by the huge commercial apparatus of the music business. He explains that instead of letting "this monster eat us, we have decided to eat them." He waves to the enormous contraption that is their stage set. Having spent the last week in the general proximity of Oasis, their music, their entourage, I can't help but think this Bono speech is pathetic. You've got to go for it, you've got to roll with it, you've got to say what you say and don't let anyone get in your way, man. You've got to live forever. You've got to *be here now*. If there is any message to Oasis's music, it is: *Do not apologize*! Being an Oasis fan means never having to say you're sorry.

After the vaguely sci-fi ending to U2's show, it's back through the gauntlet. The security people, faced with the mass of exiting fans, are much more tense. The backstage area is filled with people sporting a million different kinds of plastic laminates around their necks. They roam the concrete prairie like nomads.

Back in the skybox, the place is brimming with energy. Danny and Terry, the bodyguards, are there. They have been joined by Kevin, Liam's full-time bodyguard, who is 6'7" and has not an ounce of muscle on him, but possesses a gut like a wrecking ball.

A record company executive is speaking to Noel. He says the following: "The record is great, man! It is brilliant! Fucking incredible! It's genius! It's going to be huge!" Liam is nowhere to be found. The executive is still on his rant about what a genius Noel is. It strikes me that the executive is using hyperbole in the same way a squid uses ink—his flattery is a dense, obscuring, immobilizing liquid.

"Did you see the show?" asks Noel when he sees me.

Of course I did.

"How was the vibe out there?" he asks pensively.

"Excellent," I lie.

In fact it was merely good, but I'm coming to understand that "tops" is not an adjective reserved for special occasions. If you are around Oasis, it's best to say that everything they do is "tops!"

We retreat behind the black curtain. The luxury skybox holds 12 padded seats, and is enclosed in glass. To the sides are other sealed jury box–like capsules. In front of us looms the massive U2 stage set, signifying the latest technology, enormous financial expenditures, and performance anxiety. We stare up at the black moonlit sky through the stadium's painfully bright lights and I ask Noel about the new record.

"We just went for that fuck-off wall of sound. We just turned up every channel and went for it."

At which point Liam floats into the adjoining skybox like a ghost, sits down, and throws an arm over the back of each adjoining chair. He's still wearing sunglasses, yellow-tinted, and that vicious, blank stage expression. His gold jewelry flashes in the harsh fluorescent light. On each wrist is a watch—the face of one is white, the other is black. Noel is facing me, and hasn't yet noticed his brother behind him, just a few feet away, enclosed in his own glass box, breathing different air.

How has success changed Liam? I ask. The glass is two inches thick. It's soundproof. But as if by telepathy, Liam turns toward me. He stares right at me and, after a moment's pause, gives me the thumbs-up sign.

"He's become more mad," says Noel. "He's totally fuckin' mental. He lives in...." He laughs to himself. "He lives in this weird-bizarre-bizarre concept." Noel gets a truly mystified look in his eyes.

I ask him to explain the concept.

"If I could explain that concept to you, mate, I'd bottle it, and I'd fuckin' sell it, and I'd be even richer than I am now."

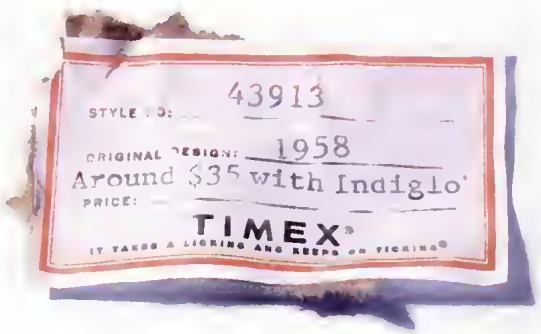
At this point he notices that my eyes are darting nervously over his shoulder, and he turns to look. Liam's attention has wandered off to the vaguely apocalyptic scene outside and below. It is an appropriately regal view, regal not in the sense of gowns and crowns and pomp and circumstance but of the stuff that gets you all of that, regal in the Genghis Khan, Attila the Hun sense of conquering.

Noel sees him, chuckles, turns back to me, and takes a serious nibble on his index finger. Liam's arrival has changed the chemistry, as ever.

"I love the geezer," he says. "I love him. And I don't say that just because he's my brother. He makes me laugh. He's so surreal." ●

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At the height of 1970s rock'n'roll bloat, Fleetwood Mac's **Stevie Nicks** was the O.D.—the Original Diva. Dressed head-to-toe in flowing black, singing songs about Welsh witches, bouncing between rock-star boyfriends (bandmates, no less), snorting drugs all the while, she wrote the book on feminine excess, and one young reader was a girl named **Courtney Love**. On the eve of Fleetwood Mac's reunion album and tour, the two Goth blondes gathered for an historic meeting of the muses.

COURTNEY LOVE: I was watching your new MTV special, and "Silver Springs" sent chills down my spine. It was like great opera, or like *A Streetcar Named Desire*. It was an absolute war between the sexes. And one of the things that struck me was how you epitomized the ideal gorgeous, California, in-your-convertible girlfriend. *Almost*. You can see the schism in your performance, where you check yourself and say, I am so much more than that. You filled that stage so much with your archetype, it was incredible. I just can't imagine you as a 21-year-old waitress in San Jose supporting Lindsey Buckingham. It freaks me out. Hey, can I say what I'm drinking my coffee out of?

STEVIE NICKS: Yes, you can.

I'm drinking my coffee out of a mug from the Betty Ford Center. It says BETTY FORD on it. I think that's super chic.

[Laughs]

I wish my rehab had sold souvenirs. They did, actually. They had sweatshirts, but I didn't buy one because I had no money and they didn't take credit cards.

I think at Betty Ford they *give* you a cup.

I bet they have lots of cool stuff there. So anyway, when I was very young I thought of you as the most pampered child of California. But then I heard "Dreams" and "Rhiannon," and I thought, Is she this thing or is she this other thing, this poet?

You have to understand. I didn't want to be a waitress, but I believed that Lindsey shouldn't have to work, that he should just lay on the floor and practice his guitar and become more brilliant every day. And as I watched him become more brilliant every day, I felt very gratified. I was totally devoted to making it happen for him. I never worried about not being successful; I wanted to make it possible for *him* to be successful. And when you really feel that way about somebody, it's very easy to take your own personality and quiet it way down. I knew my career was going to work out fine. I knew I wasn't going to lose myself.

How did you two meet?

I met Lindsey in high school in San Francisco. We had gone to some party and he was sitting in the middle of this gorgeous living room playing a song. I walked over and stood next to him, and the song was "California Dreaming," and I just started singing with him.

He was playing "California Dreaming"? *Oh my God!*

And so I just threw in my Michelle Phillips harmony, and...he was so beautiful. And then I didn't really see him again until two years later, when he called me and asked me if I wanted to be in his rock'n'roll band, which I didn't even know existed. And within two or three months we were opening for Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, all the San Francisco bands. Two years later, we packed up and moved to Los Angeles with about 12 demos.

When you and Lindsey joined Fleetwood Mac in 1974, it sounded like you were really coming into your own. I mean, songs like "Rhiannon" and "Landslide." Those are profound. But here was a band that had been together a thousand years, right? They originally came from this time and place—Yardbirds, Zeppelin, etc.—and while everyone had made it out of there, they were the dog with fleas. *John Mayall* was bigger than them. I mean, everybody. And then what happens? They get you and Lindsey, and here you are, this world-class beauty with a voice from heaven and these amazing songs, and it makes them huge. And you huger. And you're just the girlfriend, the silent supporter of the tortured genius. That must have made everyone crazy.

Well...my success was not easy for Lindsey, not easy for *any* of them. And I knew that, and I felt *terrible* about it. There's a part of me that would have said, Let's tell everybody to stop talking about Stevie. Stop giving Stevie all this attention, because, guess what, it's making Stevie miserable. Because I have to live with these other four people who know it's not my fault, but they can't help but blame me a little, and it's killing me.

But I also remember getting very upset with Lindsey one night when I realized that he and Christine [McVie] had written "World Turning." I had been with Lindsey all those years and we had never written a song together. Plus, I walked into the studio and they were singing it together...

You never wrote songs together?

No, no. I would sit down and play him "Gold Dust Woman" on the guitar, my simple little version, and two days later it would be recorded, and it would be recorded *really well*. He could take my songs and do what I would do if I had his musical talent. When he wasn't angry with me, that is. That's why there's seven or eight great songs, and there's 50 more where he wasn't happy with me and didn't help me.

One thing you've always done, I realized recently, is write about these muses, these other females, these goddesses. These parts of yourself. You don't write big, sexy love ballads about men. I wondered why that was for you? Because I do the same thing. I was listening to a song of Billy Corgan's yesterday called "I Need a Lover." It's sexy, okay. But I'm listening and I'm going, I can't write like this.

You know who else asked me that same question a long time ago: Prince. We were really close for a while—we never went to bed together, but we had something that was very, very special. And he always said, Why don't you write songs that are more sexual? And I said, Well, because that's not the way I am in my real life. I am not a person who walks naked through the house. I will always have something beautiful on. It will be beautiful, and it will enhance me.

Maybe what Prince was trying to say is you should be more, "I want to fuck you, baby."

But I believe that there is a certain amount of mysticism that *all* women should have, that you should never tell all your secrets, that you should *never* tell everybody all about you. I never have.

Speaking of secrets, I've heard that you've kept a diary the entire course of your career.

I have. It's all written down.

If you were ever to let those things out, I imagine that empires would fall.

But you know what? Even in my journals, I don't ever write about sex. I write around it, so that I know what I meant, but if somebody else read it, they might not understand. Nobody could ever get the real story unless I chose to share it with them.

Tell me more about your love life.

Well, when Lindsey and I broke up during *Rumours*, I started going out with Don Henley. And you know, I was like the biggest Eagles fan of life.

"Warm smell of colitas...."

[Laughing] Totally. And we went out, off and on, for about two years.

That's a perfect couple right there. I mean, that's the California, the San Andreas Fault couple. He was really cute, too.

He was *really* cute, and he was elegant. Don taught me to spend money.

How did he teach you to spend money? I've never had a guy do that for me.

Well, I just watched him, that's how. He didn't visibly set out to do that. I just watched him. He was okay with, say, buying a house like that [snaps her fingers], or sending a Learjet to pick you up.

I had a Learjet phase for a little bit, but I couldn't really afford it. While we're on the subject, tell me about your rose Porsche.

Me and a bunch of my friends were in my house in Phoenix, we were up all night doing lots of cocaine and watching that movie *Risky Business*. That's one of my favorites. And I just made a call and that Porsche was delivered.

You said, "I want a rose Porsche"?

I said, I want the same Porsche that's in *Risky Business*.

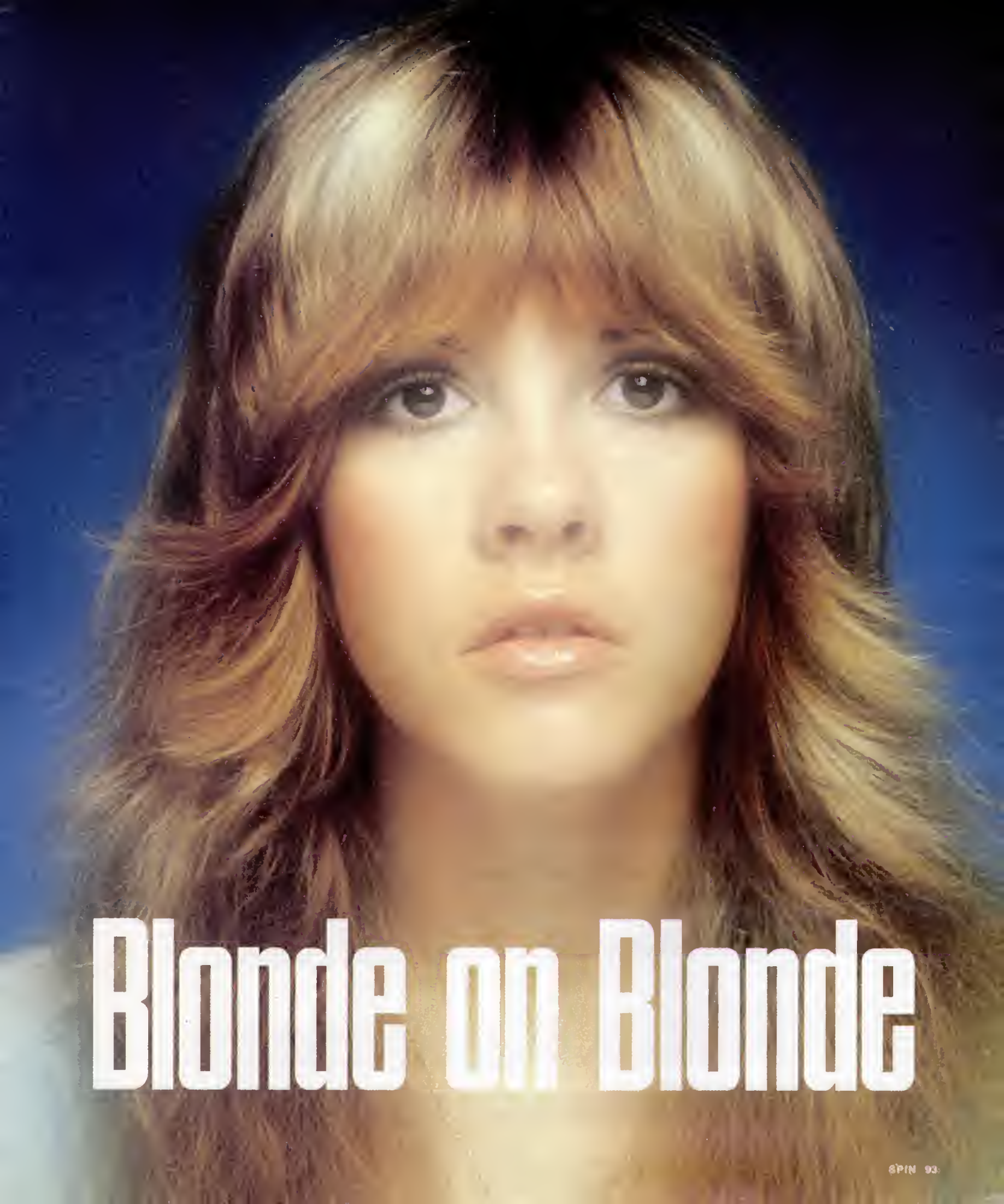
There's a rose Porsche in *Risky Business*?

Yes, there is. And I bought it. That morning.

Wow. You know, I still think Don Henley is sexy.

He is sexy. He's such an interesting guy. Here's one thing that Don did that freaked my band out so much. We're all in Miami, Fleetwood Mac and the Eagles. They're recording at this gorgeous house they'd rented on the water. It's totally romantic.

S. EMERSON/SYGMA



Blonde on Blonde







Is it pink?
It's pink.
Of course it's pink.
It's like Mar-a-Lago. Anyway, he sends a limousine driver over to our hotel with a box of presents for me, and they're delivered right into the breakfast room where everyone's eating. There's a stereo, a bunch of fabulous records. There's incredible flowers and fruits, beautiful...
Pomegranates and figs and dates, of course.
Yes. And...
Oh, I love him!
The limousine driver is taking all this out onto the table and I'm going, Oh, please, please, this is not going to go down well. And they want to know who it's from. And Lindsey is not happy.
Gardenias?
Yeah. So I started going out with him. And this is not popular. Sure, Lindsey and I are totally broken up, I have every right in the world to go out with people, but.... I spend most of my time with the band, and it's not real conducive to having a relationship. So I went out with Don for a while, I went out with [Eagles songwriter] J.D. Souther for a while. We had an incredible time.
But he wasn't as famous as you. It must have been a lot more fun going out with somebody just as famous.
Well, all those Eagles were an interesting group of guys. They were such good songwriters. I was blown away. I was totally awestruck. I mean, I was very, very famous, but it didn't make me less awestruck with these men than anybody else. I was just as big of a fan.

And then.... We're just doing a condensed version of what happened with me. And then I fell in love with Mick [Fleetwood]. And that went on for two years. Never in a million years could you have told me that would happen. That was the biggest surprise. Mick is definitely one of my great, great loves.
How was that between Lindsey and Mick?
That was not good. That was not good for anybody else in the band. Everybody was so angry, because Mick was married. To a wonderful girl and he had two wonderful children, and I was horrified. I loved these people. I loved his family. So it couldn't possibly work out. And it didn't. It just couldn't.
And the drugs?
The drugs didn't help, needless to say. We did a lot of blow. I don't remember how much we did; we spent an awful lot of money on it. You know, we were constantly on the road—the tour for the first album was almost a year long, *Rumours* was a year, and *Tusk* was a solid year. We never stopped, never took vacations. And with coke you can stay up way too late, you don't sleep for three days.
Did you keep your drug habits secret from each other? Like, in my band, when someone's had a problem, it's always been a secret from everyone else. We would never do it together, communally.
Oh, no. No, no, no. It was much more of a family thing. And it wasn't just us.
Well, that's in the spirit of the era.
If this was 20 years ago, we would have sat here and done a gram of cocaine while we did this interview. I wouldn't have known you previously, and we still would have done it together. It was just the friendly, fun thing to do. I swear to God, that's how it was.
I think the intriguing thing to a lot of people is that there's never been a period in rock as debauched as the period after *Rumours*. Nobody's touched it. I'm sure other people have done more drugs, other people have lived better, but no one, for one thing, was dressed as great. No one has ever looked as fabulous during their flushed-with-success period—not the Beatles, maybe not even the Rolling Stones. Somebody gave me a poster for my birthday; it's a famous picture of you guys standing outside a chicken coop. And you all look amazing. You had such great hair. You still do. And back then, rock divas didn't have high-end colorists.
No.
And you didn't get free clothes from Dolce & Gabbana.
No.
You had to make your own clothes. You had to create your own divadom. Like wearing black, which was a very fashion-forward choice for the '70s. Why'd you start doing that?
Because as a blonde I looked better in all black. Plus it made things a lot easier; you could just have a bunch of pieces.
But nobody wore all black in the '70s. You were just like Johnny Cash.







CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES; S. EMERSON/SYGMA; H.W. WORTHINGTON. (2); TONY DENONNO/GLOBE PHOTOS. H.W. WORTHINGTON; DAVID LACHAPELLE; G. DEGUIRE/LONDON FEATURES; G. BODNAR/DOLS/RETNA; J. HYAMS/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES; LONDON FEATURES. AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS







Yeah. And I loved that. I still love that.

It's different now, 'cause it's very Bsrneys, but back then it was pretty fucking bold. What kind of clothes did, like, the Eagles wesr? Did they wear real expensive turquoise belt buckles and...

No. They were very cool. They just wore beautiful jeans and silk shirts.

Was Henley, like, rocking the Armani?

You know what? When I was hanging around with them, I had no idea what kind of clothes they wore, except that they always looked good.

I remember reading one description of you finishing "Gold Dust Woman" in the middle of the night wrapped in your bisck shawl. Was sll that witchy, Gothic stuff completely your thing yet?

Oh yeah. Ever since I moved out of Mom and Dad's. But in Fleetwood Mac I had to really calm that part of me down. I mean, they put up with my incense, let me do a little lighting, but I couldn't bring a lot of my stuff in there.

There's s song of yours, what is it? It's about—oh my God, it's sbout...

"Gypsy"?

"Gypsy"! Right, "Gypsy." About putting s scarf over a lamp. I was like, yeah. Even in rehab I put the scarf over the lamp.

Me too, you know.

So the band didn't put up with that stuff?

Well, I just have to be very careful and tasteful with them. I can't be quite as Gypsy as I'd like.

The downside of being in a band is that you can't have everything you want.

But the upside, the upside is incredible. The team/gang thing.

It's great. When I walk with my band up to the stage, I feel like an astronaut. [Laughing] I feel like we should be in slow motion, and the wind should be blowing.

Being s movie star is pretty cool, but being a rock star is just better. Especially a lady rock star. I'm resily grateful for it.

So am I. Every day. And that's something I don't think goes away. It's like, I totally appreciate being able to buy, say, this thousand-dollar cashmere blanket.

I do. Because if I couldn't, I would hate the fact that I would have to go back to real, regular blankets.

At Penney's.

At Penney's. [Laughing] And I never wanted to go to Penney's even when I was a little girl.

I didn't want to go to Penney's, either. I knew, when I was in there, I knew I shouldn't be in there.

I am not in the right store, Mom.

There's something wrong. This is wrong.

Take me to the good store.

Exactly. [Laughs] I want to ask about when you put out your first solo record, *Bella Donna*, in 1981. Were the guys pissed off?

Well, it was a big deal, obviously. Going away to another record company at the peak of Fleetwood Mac was not a real popular thing.

People should understand thst at the time you made *Bella Donna*, you were one of the biggest stars on the planet. Certainly the biggest female in rock. It must have been so much hsrder back then being a famous woman in rock. You were entering this field almost by yourself. I mean, I always thought that Janis Joplin had a really hard road, because no one had ever been down it.

And she didn't make it down.

But you did. You went *much* further than her. You were a pioneer. You were dealing with all these sexusl politics, being a feminine woman who was doing this thing. I'm resily surprised that you're less schizophrenic thsn you are. Because you were right out in front, with the projections of the entire world put upon you. I mesn, heavily. I had *Bella Donn*s when I wss in Japsn, stripping. I was 15, I think. It was the year that Chsrles and Diana got married. And that's what i listened to all the time to keep me sane. But you must have been feeling so many things then, because of your fame: the energy of young girls and older women using you, men using you. Did you start to feel a sense of magic about yourself? It's hard to control the ego sometimes. I know. It's hard to stay grounded.

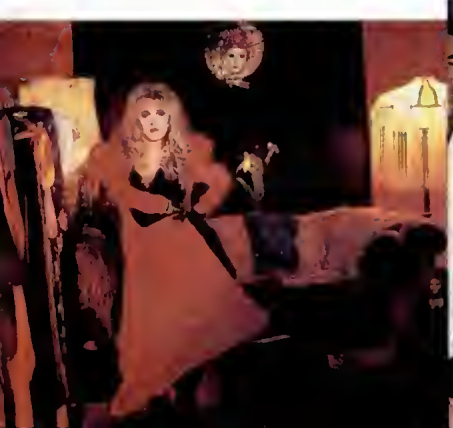
I think if I had just done my solo career and had been able just to be me, I probably would have been a lot more ego'd out than I was. Being in a group of five really does keep your ego in place. It's not as easy to get totally conceited when you're in a band.

It's not even conceit, though. I believe thst it's s product of energy being projected on you. I'm sorry, there's a psychic transference that you have when you go to the bookstore and you get recognized, snd they trest you as your Stevieness or your Jim Carreyness or your Courtneyness or whstever it is they expect from you *all* the time. It must have been insane to be one of the first women out there in this srt form. It must have been a battlefield. Is that one of the reasons you moved to the desert?

Well, I've always lived there. My mom and dad are from there. That's why I bought a house in Scottsdale,

continued on page 154

Portraits of a lady: top left, cover of *Buckingham/Nicks*, 1973; second from left, Fleetwood Mac, 1974: clockwise from left, Stevie Nicks, Lindsey Buckingham, John McVie, Mick Fleetwood, Christine McVie; far right, a crystal vision, circa *Rumours*; bottom right, Mac version '97.







Secrets of the Ch-ching



Loud Records' Steven Rifkind is best known as the man behind the Wu-Tang Clan. But Mike Rubin **finds that his real achievement is the Street Team, an insidiously effective and little-known form of insurgent inner-city marketing that is changing the face of hip in America.** Photograph by Brian Smale.

THE LATE-AFTERNOON SUN IS JUST BEGINNING to ebb when the van carrying the Loud Records Street Team squeals to a halt in Harlem. It's a mid-July scorcher—almost hot enough to condemn the rubber soles of basketball sneakers to a fiery hell—but that hasn't stopped a sweaty multitude from gathering around the Holcombe Rucker Playground at 157th Street and Frederick Douglass Boulevard, site of the Rucker Entertainment Classic hoops tournament, perhaps the most famous of all street ball competitions. The throng milling about the perimeter of the playground is so dense that it's difficult to take more than a step or two in any direction, but as far as the eight members of the Street Team are concerned, the more people here, the better. They aren't here for any game, they're here for the crowd.

David "Curry" Jaimongal unloads boxes of the hip-hop label's *Loud Summer Heat* sampler cassettes and cassingles of "Hoodlum" by the Loud rap duo Mobb Deep and begins passing out free tapes to the kids who quickly huddle around him. A few yards away from Jaimongal is his Teammate Chris Greene, wearing a baseball jersey that looks like a Seattle Mariners home uniform, except across the chest where it should read MARINERS is emblazoned PEPSI. He's handing out complimentary 3'x2' posters bearing a black-and-white '70s photo of Dr. J performing a slamdunktomy, only right now the poster isn't just promoting the ex–Philadelphia 76ers star but also Converse Chuck Taylor shoes. A cherubic seven-year-old bounds up to get a poster, hands it to a friend a few feet away, then heads back for seconds. "Shorty," Greene gently admonishes the tot, "I blessed you already."

Jaimongal hands an even smaller tyke in a king-size Sacramento Kings T-shirt a Mobb Deep tape



Taking it to the street: Steven Rifkind, sitting, with members of the Loud Street Team; far left, Chef Lowe; second from left, David "Curry" Jaimongal; third from left, O.J. Wedlaw.

Rifkind employs the cool kids themselves.

end a Dr. J poster. The toddler's father bops his son lightly on the head with the rolled-up poster, encouraging him to say "Thank you"; for his manners, Dad gets his own tape. "You've got to be selective," explains the 25-year-old Brooklynite. "Anybody you see with a Walkman, you hand it to them right away because they actually buy music. Ladies get first choice, especially if they look good."

Leaving a trail of promotional material in their wake, Jaimongal and Greene weave their way through the crowd to the entrance of the basketball courts. A team entered by Mike Tyson is today's main attraction at the Rucker, and apperently the disgraced former heavyweight champ is here somewhere. But so many onlookers have packed the blocks around the playground to catch e glimpse of Jaws that no one else may enter the court area. There's really no need for the Loud posse to go inside anyway: Stickering specialist Buddah Ces had already plastered all the poles surrounding the courts with Loud decals earlier today. "This job is 24-7," says Buddah, petting his belly proudly, "365 around the clock."

The tapes, posters, and stickers may seem like so much litter, but to Loud Records Chairman Steven Rifkind, they're all part of a much bigger picture, one that has helped to transform him from Long Island *homeboychik* into hip-hop's unlikeliest new mogul. Shlumping in a coffee-colored easy chair in his office in Loud's midtown Manhattan headquerters a few weeks earlier, the 35-year-old Rifkind herdly looks like a millionaire record executive: His face is covered in stubble the same length as the bristly hair on top of his heed, and he's weering e green "R.L. Phys. Ed—#67" Polo gym-style T-shirt, baggy blue jean shorts, and a pair of brand new white leather Nikes with neon green swooshes that he dangles over the arms of the cheir. Only the cigar he's puffing gives a hint of his status as a player.

While Rikfind's smoke of choice is an authentic Cuban stogie, not a hemp-packed blunt, these are high times indeed for the chairman and his company: The afternoon I meet with him is June 30, the last day of a fiscal year that has seen Loud gross $55.4 million in revenues worldwide, up from $26 million the year before and $14 million the year before that (none of which includes the $50 million RCA peid last fall for helf of Loud). This same day, on the other side of the globe, Chinese government officials ere welcoming the handover of Hong Kong, whose movie studios produced the kung fu films that inspired a crew of Staten Island MCs to dub themselves the Wu-Tang Clan. Although Loud is also home to such commercially successful artists as Mobb Deep, Tha Alkaholiks, and Funkmaster Flex, it was the Wu end their ensuing spinoff acts—including Raekwon, Method Man, Genius/GZA, Ghostface Killah, and Ol' Dirty Bastard—that have been primarily or indirectly responsible for making the label mad money as the Clan remapped the commercial landscape of East Coast rap.

When the Clan's second record, *Wu-Tang Forever*, debuted at No.1 this past June, selling 612,000 copies in its opening week—astounding numbers for a double album—it was sweet vindication for Rifkind, who had taken a colossal gamble back in 1992 when he signed the Wu-Tang to a unique and somewhat unprecedented contract. Rifkind allowed the individual MCs to cut their own record deals with other labels, figuring that each successive solo effort would help promote the next official Wu-Tang album at no cost to him, building up the advance hype for the eventual day when all the wandering Wus would reunite—their triumphant return released, of course, on Loud. "The group is always bigger then the solo artist," says Rifkind between slurps of an iced coffee, "so I knew for Wu-Tang number two we'd break every kind of record in the history of music."

Well, maybe not quite *every* record, but come early summer *Forever* was a chart smash, all built strictly on word of mouth, without the benefit of redio or MTV airplay. Such a scenario was hardly guesswork on Rifkind's part, though, since word-of-mouth marketing, the kind used by the Street Teams up in Harlem, is Rifkind's forte. Like the Wu solo ventures, Loud Records is merely e spinoff of e lerger concept: the Steven Rifkind Company (SRC), a promotion and marketing firm Rifkind founded ten years ago with the goal of creating exposure for hip-hop acts by selling directly to the streets.

What SRC does is send out squads of enthusiastic young hip-hop heads like Greene, Jaimongal, and Ces to do grassroots promotion in 26 cities—from obvious cultural flashpoints like New York and Los Angeles to less central locales like Greensboro, North Cerolina, and Norfolk, Virginia—where they give away product, test reaction, gather feedback, and work the crowd. Rifkind's crew aren't "cool-hunters," those independent marketers or company reps who canvass the streets for hipsters; they're the cool kids themselves. Often, they are college or commercial radio DJs, or, as an SRC prospectus terms them, "well-connected player[s] in the hip-hop community," who disseminate data by "reaching urban-influentiels in their own environment"—basically a fency way of saying young African-Americans talking to other young African-Americans in major metropolitan areas.

It's a revolutionary, cost-effective approach, and Fortune 500 companies have lined up for Rifkind's services at a tab that ranges from $300,000 to $1 million per client—all of which makes Rifkind *the* white guy most responsible for transleting the aesthetics of inner-city style into a language corporate America can dig. Besides promoting hip-hop end R&B records for almost every major music compeny—except the ones that have now started their own street teams—the Rifkind Company has worked with Miramex,



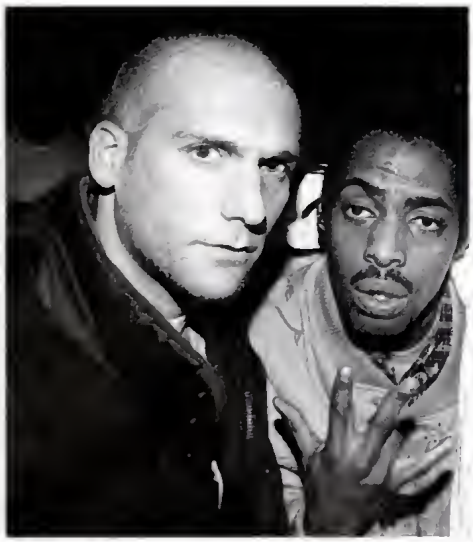






Clockwise from top left: the Loud Street Team handing out corporate goodies; Lowe pastes up a poster for the rapper Big Punisher on New York's Park Avenue; Jaimongal in action; Chris Greene (in white shirt) looks on while Jaimongal unloads posters.

DIETMAR







Cooliest: Rifkind with, clockwise from bottom left, Treach, Coolio, Russell Simmons, and LL Cool J.

MGM/UA, Tommy Hilfiger, and Dutch "Sea-Gear" manufacturer Helly Hansen, which reportedly increased U.S. sales from $400,000 to $4 million annually in its first four years with Rifkind. (Among his other consulting clients are *Vibe* and Quincy Jones, who are part of SPIN's new ownership group.) When the Fox television network wanted to promote its Thursday night lineup of *Martin*, *Living Single*, and *New York Undercover*, the network hired SRC, and it was Rifkind to whom Nike and Converse turned to divulge the secret relationship between blacks and shoes.

"I can tell a record company in two days if they have a record or not, and then we go from there," says Rifkind, leaning back in his chair and readjusting his nuts, as if for emphasis. "We know that kid from the time he steps out of his house, every step he's making, where he's going to hang out, what's the scoop on where to eat lunch at, where he's getting his hair cut, what's the cool way to get it cut, what's the cool record store to go to. We know all these things, and before we attack we get all the information from the street first, which none of the other companies are doing. They'll just throw a product out there and see if it sticks. You take a piece of pasta, you throw it against the wall, and it sticks, then it's ready or whatever." He pauses to take a pull from his cigar. "We'll check it before we even throw it against the wall." He smiles. "We'll *taste* it."

Just as in the military, where the era of conventional warfare is over, replaced by door-to-door fighting and guerrilla combat—so too does street-level marketing now carry the day in the eternal struggle of corporations battling to win the hearts and minds of the consumer. The street has no rules, save one: Once you go wack, you never go back. Well, not without a lot of focus groups, enyway.

To deal with such a voletile marketplace, Rifkind employs unconventional tactics. When the Street Teams make their reconnaissance missions into urban entarprisa zones, it's often a case of anything goes. "The best thing from one of those trips could be meeting with a local drug kingpin and hitting him off with a samplar tape and him driving around the ghetto playing it," says Joseph "Mojo" Nicosia, Rifkind's right-hend men. "That can be *such* en impact, but try telling thet to some guy in a corporate suite and they'll think you're fucking nuts."

Nicosia sees an almost philosophical distinction between guerrilla marketing and traditional approaches. "There's a big difference between a college rep who grew up with e silver spoon in his mouth and a kid who grew up dealing crack on the sidewalk," he says. "The kid who's been dealing crack on the corner is a businessman, through and through. He has to enswer to somebody, he has to have a certain amount in his hand, he's got to know how to make ends meet and he's got to be in the mix. The college rep gets sent there by his perents, they're shelling it out, and he doesn't give a shit about enything. I'm not saying he's not needed, but I'm going with my man, all the way."

After en hour or so of passing out freebies, Greene, Jaimongal, and tha other Street Teamers pile back into the van. Driving past the intersection of 152nd and Frederick Douglass, Jeimongal spots Polo model Tyson Beckford cruising in a jeep in the opposite lane. Jaimongal beeps his horn, yells Beckford's name, and tosses the model a cassette out the window of the moving van. As we snake our way through the Harlem traffic, Jaimongal squints out into the disappearing daylight, watching rambunctious teenagers scurrying about—each one a prospective beneficiary of tonight's marketing agenda. "You've got to be hungry in this business," he says quietly, stroking his goatee, "because it's nothing but a hustle."

Steven Rifkind's bar mitzvah was the bomb.

Not the service itself, mind you, though the sight of the 13-year-old delivering his Torah portion at Temple Beth Am in Merrick, Long Island, on a Saturday afternoon in March 1975 more than pleased the whole Rifkind *mishpucheh*—proud perents Jules and Eleanor, younger brothers Robert and Jonathen, grandparents Harry end Miriam, Aunt Stacy end Uncle Roy. No, the real event was the reception later that evening at the Sands banquet hall in nearby Lido Beach. The Eagles' "Best of My Love," Olivia Newton-John's "Have You Never Been Mellow," and the Doobie Brothers' "Black Water" may have been burning up the pop music charts et the time, but Steven's shindig was a thoroughly funky affair: Among the guests present for dinner end dancing that night were James Brown, the Herdest Working Man in Show Business; and Millie Jackson, the Hardest Cussing Woman, both recording artists for Spring Records, the R&B label run by Steven's father. The party's onstage entertainment was provided by another Spring act, the Fatback Band. Four years leter on Spring, the group would release "King Tim III (Personality Jock)," widely regerded es the first rap record—arriving in stores one week before the Sugarhill Geng's "Rapper's Delight"—but this still being 1975, Fatback didn't perform the tune that would one day be their contribution to hip-hop history; they saved that moment for their gig at brother Jonathan's bar mitzvah in 1980.

Given such soulful beginnings, maybe it's not so incongruous that Steven Rifkind would become en expert on the pulse of the 'hood. Rifkind's fether, Jules, has been in the music business since the '50s; respect for him throughout the industry was such that in the '60s Herb Alpert end Jerry Moss even approached him about investing with them on the start-up of their new Los Angeles–based record company. Jules didn't want to leave his family behind in New York, so, as Jonathan points out, "Their label is called A&M instead of ARM."

A publicist who's frequently worked with Loud calls the Rifkind men "Jewish dons," and Steven's consigliere Nicosia agrees. "My grandfather is from Sicily, and everything was loyalty, everything was your word, and these guys are really like that," he says. "Jules gave them a life where they had a silver spoon in their mouth but he gave them the fucking grit and determination of a Sicilian family. Everything is family end loyalty."

Indeed, Rifkind keeps his immediate relatives close. Youngest brother Jonathen is en executive vice president et Rifkind's companies, mother Eleanor handles all the travel arrangements for both firms, end Jules still does some independent radio promotion for Loud. In addition, Rifkind's primary partner, Rich Isaacson, grew up around the corner from him in Merrick, where as kids they used to fantasize about going into business together. "It's all built on the *Godfather* principle," says Randy Roberts, Loud's vice president of sales and retail and Rifkind's first cousin.

Rifkind's actual and extended clan were all in the house this past July in New York's Central Park for Steven's black-tie wedding to Nicole Lamy, a modal with the Wilhemina egency and mother of his two-year-old son, Alex. Almost 300 friends, family, and music-biz movars and shakers—including Sean "Puffy" Combs, Andre Harrell, Russell Simmons, Quincy Jones, and Wu-Tang's RZA and U-God—were among the dearly beloved gathered into the Boathouse restaurant on a muggy evening to watch them exchange vows, and maybe do a little deal-consummating of their own. The reception was actually less *Godfether* than New Jack gangsta: Sneekers eccesorizing tuxas, diners holding a fork in one hand and a cellular in the other, end execs chomping Cuban cigars as they snepped pictures of one another in pairs and triples like the eward-show photos in industry trades. "It's a fucking power piss in here!" enthused one playar to another in the bathroom. "I'm honored to be pissing next to you!"

RIFKIND, L.L. COOL J. AND SIMMONS: PATRICK MCMULLEN

"It's all built on the Godfather principle."

Yet there was still a little whiff of old-world drama: The electricity kept cutting out, killing some of the lights and the air conditioning, and the justice of the peace was reluctant to deliver the nuptials because, according to Jonathan, the Boathouse staff had misplaced the marriage license. Just moments before walking down the aisle, Jonathan says, Steven collared the Boathouse manager, and his brother had to pull him off. ("He'll throw a chair at somebody," Nicosia says affectionately. "I've seen it: He threw a chair at a business affairs meeting. He's fucking nuts.") According to several members of the Loud entourage, at the end of the night the manager returned a check for half the cost of the wedding. (The Boathouse denies that an altercation took place and says that Rifkind was given a smaller refund for reasons related to the number of guests attending the wedding.)

Rifkind's rise to high-roller status isn't too shabby for a guy who got kicked out of high school at 17 for getting in a fight with the principal (he was eventually readmitted and allowed to graduate) and who dropped out of a learning-disabled program at Hofstra University—both Steven and Jonathan are dyslexic—after just three days. A job in the mailroom at Spring soon followed, and after four years there, he had risen to the post of vice president of promotion. At Spring, future Boogie Down Productions DJ Scott La Rock served as Steven's intern, and he would take Rifkind out when he spun at club gigs. Rifkind soon signed hip-hop acts like Melle Mel, Ice-T, and Mr. Magic to release 12-inches, and he began spending weekends with Mr. Magic as the DJ did his mix show. There, he witnessed firsthand New York's strong underground network of hip-hop fans, from record store clerks to college radio DJs. "At the time I used them as interns," Rifkind recalls, "but I realized, if I really take care of these guys then when they get some records and I start paying them on a weekly basis, they'll be busting their ass for us."

On his 24th birthday, Rifkind left Spring for a job in Los Angeles managing New Edition for a year, then handled promotion for the Delicious Vinyl label during the era of Young MC's "Bust a Move" and Tone Loc's "Wild Thing." Itching to try out his grassroots approach on his own, Rifkind took $3,000 from his savings account to buy phones, put his girlfriend's sister to work answering them, and founded the Steven Rifkind Company in 1987. Within the first month he had been signed to promote records by Boogie Down Productions, Brand Nubian, and Leaders of the New School; within the first year the company's profit was $100,000, and it doubled every year until three years ago, when it began quadrupling. With a combination of hard work and a few lucky breaks—Rifkind turned the accident of a seat on a five-hour cross-country flight next to the chairman of MCA into a sales pitch that got Rifkind a retainer deal with that company—Rifkind was soon promoting almost every major rap record that came out.

But by 1991, Rifkind decided there was no reason to merely hype other labels' product when he could apply his marketing savvy to his own records as well: Enter Loud. Wu-Tang's initial release would come two years later, but Rifkind had begun to sense that he was on the verge of blowing up a year before that, when SRC was hired by Nike, Rifkind's first non–music biz account. Rifkind spent some quality bonding time with Nike founder Phil Knight, who told him that he had started his shoe company in a similar fashion, using former University of Oregon track and field teammates to sell Tiger sneakers and building upon their network of contacts and love of running. "When Phil told me that this was the exact same formula, that's when I knew this could really be something," says Rifkind, "because a kid who's going to buy a pair of Nikes is the same kid who's going to buy a Wu-Tang record, and I knew how to reach those kids."

The evidence of Rifkind's prodigious reach is all over the Clan's latest album. *Wu-Tang Forever* has as much corporate synergy as *Batman Forever*: From the company seals of Macromedia to Apple Quicktime, there are more logos on the album's back







Hip-hop nups: left, Rifkind on his wedding night with bride Nicole Lamy, a Wilhemina model; above, with his main man, Wu-Tang's RZA.

cover (12) than the Wu have MCs (nine). *Forever*'s package comes with an offer of 50 free hours on America Online, en Enhenced CD (e combinetion CD and CD-ROM) with links to the Wu Web site, and eight different Wu-related 900 numbers at $1.98 a minute. Two pages in *Forever*'s CD booklet offer Wu merchandise, enother offers Loud gear; all that's missing is e Method Man action figure giveaway at Taco Bell. If the Wu revolution ever ends up televised, it's bound to be a pay-per-view special.

Rifkind has equally grandiose designs for his own ventures. Loud has been an industry leader in deploying Enhanced CD technology; the label plans eventually to turn their Web site into a video network; there's talk of a full clothing line—not just Loud T-shirts—and the company hopes to get into producing films within the next year. The first project: Jules owns the rights to the story of Meyer Lansky, the diminutive Russian-born Jew who, in en earlier version of business synergy, helped organize competing underworld rackets and rival crime gangs into the nationai crime syndicate. "i want this company," says Steven, "to be es big es Time Warner."

Brash dreams, certainly, but in this tight-fisted era of downsizing and restructuring Rifkind has fashioned sn ingenious way to cut costs while at the same time expanding his audience. SRC got Helly Hansen, for example, to underwrite the consumer trade advertising for the Loud group Dead Prez in exchange for heving the rappers wear Helly Hansen gear in eds, while Starter is picking up the tab for marketing Funkmaster Flex's next album. "That's like e $50,000 expense that we're now not paying for," says Jonethan Rifkind. "To piggyback off of that is tremendous for our artists becase it broadens their whole base of visibility."

It's a situation that benefits the apparel companies as well, sinca street cred converts quite fluidly into dollars. "If you put your sneakers on Method Man and kids see them, the kids go crazy," seys Andy Hilfiger, director of public relations for Tommy Jeens end the designer's brother. The Rifkind Company gets "the product out there, to the right DJs. If I sent a couple boxes of rugby shirts, let's say, to Steve for his Street Team, they'll give a DJ one of the rugbys and also their new record, so his Street Team will go to all the hot DJs and say, 'Hey, play this. By the way, this is for you to wear.' It's really eli ebout product placement, and they know how to place the stuff."

The Teem usually works a half-dozen projects at s time, sporting gear from client companies: Member Chef Lowe's bag is from Mountain Dew, Jaimongal weers e Le Coq Sportif "Coventry City Footbaii Club" jersey, Chris Greene has his Pepsi shirt, etc. "Someone wiii ask, 'Where did you get that tape from?'" says Lowe. "'A guy in e Pepsi shirt.' When somebody's handing out free stuff, people find out what you're wearing real quick. It's a talking billboard."

At ground zero of this relentless sales pitch, of course, are young biack maies—or as they are

PATRICK MCMULLEN



"Anything worth doing starts out illegal."

politely euphemised by marketers, "trendsetters," "tastemakers," and "forward-thinkers"—who must be persuaded to accept a product as *real*. There's a $7.5 billion market in basketball shoes, for example, and urban 12- to-17-year-olds, despite their significant lack of disposable income, account for 36 percent of those sales. It's ironic that the same demographic group demonized by right-wing politicians, harassed by the police, and ignored by employers is the most sought-after by many of America's richest entertainment and apparel companies, who seek the blessings of their authenticity, then sell it back to them for an inflated price. Then, once these styles are embraced as ill in the inner city, they quickly spread to skateboarders, mountain bikers, and other suburban hipsters—speeding us inevitably toward the day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to stand together in line at the mall in baggy pants and low-riding ski caps and throw gang signs at one another. Word up.

Like the *Uncanny X-Men*—or maybe the Wu-Tang themselves—Street Team members have been recruited for their special talents. These skills include stenciling (spray painting group logos), sniping (putting up posters, usually on construction sites and barricaded storefronts, or basically anywhere it says POST NO BILLS), and stickering (in subway cars and on utility poles, mailboxes, phone booths, newspaper boxes—in short, any flat, two-dimensional surface that is stationary for at least three seconds). If you live in one of the 26 cities where the Street Teams operate, you've seen their handiwork, even if you didn't realize it. "We're the city beautification program," jokes Lowe, a 23-year-old from Flatbush, Brooklyn, sporting a blue baseball cap that says HUSTLER. "We decorate the city with something like graffiti, but it's not quite."

Actually, the teams have coopted the m.o. of Old School graffiti bombers. Graffiti art was one of the thriving elements of New York's nascent hip-hop culture; police crackdowns may have cut down on the output of spray cans, but the Street Team's stickering is its de facto descendant, combining that practice's creative/destructive duality with a newfound commercial component—call it "corporate tagging."

Besides dodging the police—who regularly slap them with summonses for vandalism—the Street Teamers have to joust with rival crews in a sort of consumerist take on gang turf skirmishes. Many shoe companies have their own staff of street reps, and most major record companies and rap labels now have their own units—Def Jam, Warner Bros., Elektra, Cold Chillin', MCA, Epic, among others. "Tommy Boy is following our trail," says Ces. "They're looking to see where we went, and they'll hit there 'cause they want to win too."

"It's like a war," says O.J. Wedlaw, the 28-year-old national director of Loud's Street Teams. Despite the rivalry, teams don't rip down or cover up competitors' propaganda. "You don't really have to," says Lowe. "Space is everywhere. If the whole pole is covered, we go above it."

The altitude records for the Street Team are held by the 28-year-old Ces, a former truant officer with the New York City Board of Education, who is the squad expert at shinnying up poles to put up stickers. "I bear witness to Buddah's technique," marvels sniper extraordinaire Shamel Born. "I've seen his stuff last for months." Ces's trademark is leaving a "full blast": "To control the poles and don't leave no space for anybody else."

Ces is always on the lookout for eye-catching tricks, stickering NO PARKING and SNOW ROUTE signs the most "'cause nobody will try to hit that up." With the first-strike mentality of a Cold War hawk, he'll head out in the wee small hours before popular occasions like the Puerto Rican Day Parade or the 116th Street Festival and saturate the neighborhood with his stickiness. On this particular morning, the South Bronx native made it a point to hit all the expressway signs on the routes entering and leaving the Yankee Stadium area, so that any fans driving to the game to watch Hideki Irabu's major league debut against Detroit will have to see Wu-Tang stickers. "We are controlling this shit!" he reports. "I secured the perimeter."

In neighborhoods lacking many essential services, the last thing residents will worry about is taking down a sticker, so the Street Team's handiwork can last awhile. Some of Born's snipes, for example, stay up for as long as a year or more. Driving down 125th Street, across from the Apollo Theatre, we pass a "King Just!" poster he put up two years ago, but his record is a poster in Brooklyn from Nas's first album—four years and counting. "That shit is still living in full color!" he says. Just in case the postings have shorter life spans—or if someone else tries to take credit for their efforts—the Team fill out reports on whom they've made contact with and take photos as proof of their labor. For all this, they aren't particularly well-compensated. SRC's Isaacson says salaries range from $100 to $500 a week, meaning that some members may earn considerably less than the minimum hourly wage. (Buddah, for example, makes $550 every two weeks.) When the Team is working, however, Loud does pick up the tab for dinner.

After just such a supper break at Sylvia's Restaurant in Harlem, it's back in the van for the evening's next stop: Callaloo International, a hip-hop club in Brooklyn. We arrive at 10:30 P.M., before the club is open, so the Street Team can "totally destroy." After a few minutes, Wu paraphernalia rules everything around me: Dumpsters, phone booths, the metal gates over storefronts. Chef explains that he's applying his stickers seven feet up because that's "about average bus height," so that even passengers on public transportation will get the message. Says O.J. Wedlaw with a laugh: "It's really about just being a menace to society."

After Jaimongal delivers copies of new Loud singles to the house DJ—enduring two rounds of body pat downs and backpack searches, plus having to take off his shoes and socks in front of two snarling German shepherds to prove he hasn't hidden any razor blades—we're off to our next destination, a Funkmaster Flex party at a club on Long Island. (Before the Team finally calls it a night at about 4:30 A.M., it will have given out about 300 tapes and put up almost 700 stickers.) As we make our way from the noisy blare of the city to the tranquil residential neighborhoods of Long Island, Lowe blasts the van stereo, bringing da ruckus of his own by chanting out the window on a megaphone to Big Punisher's "Off the Books." Does the Team get cited for noise complaints too, I wonder? "We don't stay in one place long enough to get caught," he answers from the front seat. Lowe puts down the bullhorn and turns to grin at me. "Anything worth doing," he says, "always starts out illegal."

One evening in early July, after a video shoot for a new Loud R&B artist named Davina, I accompany Rifkind and his *famiglia* to dinner at Castellano's, an Italian restaurant in Midtown. Following the meal, Rifkind, cousin Randy Roberts, a Loud legal counsel, and I head off to Planet Hollywood for the premiere party for *Men in Black*, stopping at a bodega so Rifkind can buy a cigar. "Will we get in dressed like this?" wonders Roberts as we walk down 57th Street. We're all looking *extremely* casual—taking our cue from Rifkind, who sports a blue polo shirt with the Loud logo over a sleeveless white Nike tee, jean shorts, and another brand new pair of Nikes. "Hey, we're Loud Records," Rifkind replies confidently. "We've got the biggest nuts in the business right now, and this is who we are."

Sure enough, there's no problem running the guest-list gauntlet at the door, but Rifkind decides he's only going to orbit Planet Hollywood a mere 96 seconds, still ample time to press the flesh with Def Jam honcho Russell Simmons and rapper Heavy D and register his disappointment that actress Jada Pinkett is a no-show. Then we're off downtown in a cab (passing the huge Wu-Tang billboards festooned all over Times Square) to the SoHo club NV for a party in honor of Funkmastar Flex's *60 Minutes of Funk Volume 2* having just gone Gold. We navigate NV for about 15 minutes, long enough for Rifkind to light up his cigar, make lunch plans with Ed Lover, and hear the club DJ give him the ultimate props for a hip-hop honky—a shout-out to "my nigga Steve Rifkind."

With accolades like this, it figures that Steven Rifkind sees no limits to his marketing reach. "If Bill Dole, Bob Dole, whatever the hell his name is, approached us," he tells me at one point, "I could get somebody to say to him, 'I can get you all these kids. All they want is something they can touch and reach, and if you show that you would take care of them, I can get you those kids.' That's what we do for a living. That's how we sell stuff. We're the only company that sells a shitload of fucking records without any fucking airplay at all. We know these kids. If we had the contact, we could put the next President of the United States in the fucking White House." ●

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Krist Novoselic gets a new lease on rock life with Sweet 75.
By Ann Powers.
Photograph by Marcelo Krasilcic.

SWEET 75 + ALL THAT ROCK

KRIST NOVOSELIC, COLEADER OF THE SWEATY BLUES-PUNK combo Sweet 75 and famous righteous dude, is making a politically incorrect confession. "PETA's going to kill me for this," he says, chuckling. "We own a goat named Kabli Chene end he's e punk, he's always causing trouble. One day I was clipping my other goat, Mr. Wiggins, and here came Kabli, *boom!* and hit Mr. Wiggins. Then he got close in again, and I just went *pow!* I smacked him, just to calm him down." The lenkiest men elive shekes his tall head. "You can't talk to a goat. I just had to give him a pop."

Novoselic is used to dealing with ornery presences. Munching kabli chana (not the pet but the Indian chickpea dish the goat's named after) at a Manhattan restaurant, he and new musical accomplice Yva Las Vegas discuss how they gave e pop to the shedow of Novoselic's old, legendary band. Sweet 75's self-titled Geffen Records debut gets past Nirvana by melding disparate energies: Novoselic's beloved '70s hard rock and '80s punk, the Latin folk music that Las Vegas grew up singing in her native Venezuela, and the new wave she discovered when she moved to Seattle at 17. Grunge's most famous bassist also gets to play guitar god here, his big-man power riffing one strong flevor in *Sweet 75*'s cosmopolitan mix—the record also features Peter Buck's mandolin on one Spanish-language song and Herb Alpert's trumpet on another.

This wild journey in sound could never be mistaken for grunge, but Sweet 75 still contends with Kurt-loving audiences. "There are always going to be really rude people who feel they have to communicate how you're not like somebody else," says Las Vegas, who exudes her own fascinations, including turquoise hair and a voice with the dark, tangy bite of a blood orange. "Of course it effects me, but so what? All I expect is for the bend to trenscend the history that came before us."

History began anew in May, 1994, when a friend arranged for Las Vegas, e veteran Pike Plece Merket busker, to sing "Happy Birthday" to Novoselic at his 29th birthday bash. He offered to produce some tracks for her; the colleboretion clicked, end soon Sweet 75 were practicing every day. Novoselic says the process wasn't that different from Nirvana's brainstorming sessions: "Kurt would bring a song structure in, and we would hash it out. It works the same way with Sweet 75."

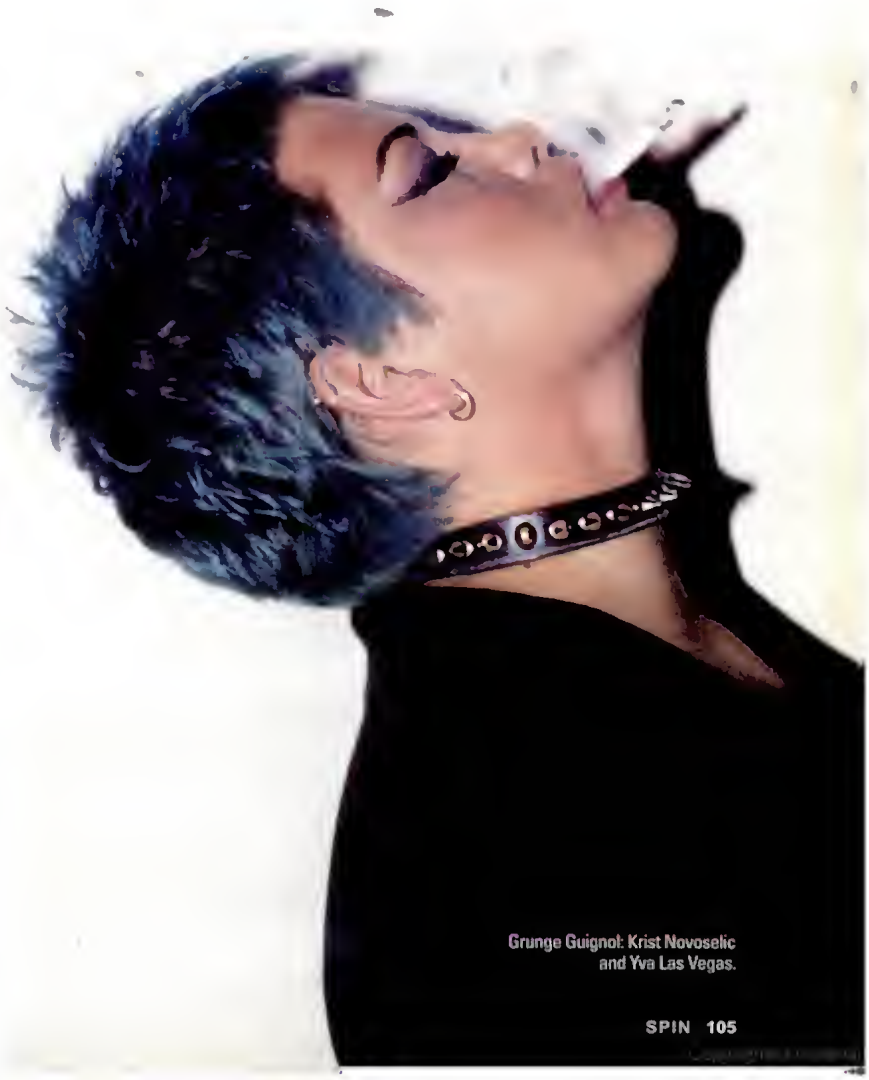
The fect that a women holds up half this partnership is no big deal. "I've been married for five-and-a-half years," Novoselic points out. "I'm used to being sensitive to certain espects of the female psyche."

"And if he's not, I beat him over the heed," Las Veges teases. "No, really, I've worked with men a lot, and I've had my bad experiences. But Krist is a sweetie."

Trading jokes and opinions across a tableful of curry dishes, Novoselic and Las Vegas clearly connect as friends and fellow Seattle music scene veterans. They're both in their 30s, settled (Las Vegas wed her longtime partner at the most recent gay rights march on Washington), and cheerily uninterested in becoming superstars. "Who cares about media hype?" scoffs Novoselic. "Good riddance, I say." While he continues his work on behelf of Washington State artists' rights, he's not ready to retire his amp for a politician's suit and tie. "If I had a law degree I would consider it," he says. "But right now, I'm so jezzed ebout the band. There's always time to do other stuff." Like becoming a senator. Or training those goats. ●

STYLING: BERNADETTE/ART DEPARTMENT. MAKEUP: MICHAEL DELFINO/ABANTU





Grunge Guignol: Krist Novoselic and Yva Las Vegas.

PLAY MISSY FOR ME

Forget "Puffy": One-woman hit factory Missy "Misdemeanor" Elliott has fashioned the hippest beats of the season. By Karen R. Good. Photograph by James Smolka.

"BEEP-BEEP / OOOH GOT THE KEYS TO THE JEEP / VRRRROOMM." I'M drivin' to the beach—actually, a man-made island inside Palm Beach Ocean Studios in West Palm Beach, Florida—for the taping of Lil' Kim's video "Not Tonight." Because many of the women from the single's all-star lineup—Kim, TLC's Lisa "Left Eye" Lopes, Da Brat, Hot 97's Angie Martinez, and Missy "Misdemeanor" Elliott—have brought *many* of their friends here, the room is brimming with people whose futures are so bright, they gotta wear shades. *In*doors. Short skirts and tight pants are second skin to bootays that would have Isaac Newton completely stumped. Meanwhile, Lil' Cease from Junior M.A.F.I.A. and his crew pass out bottles of Hennessy, Martell, and Baileys.

'Til ungodly hours, each artist tapes her part, each performance a small revelation. Angie is laid back, almost too much so; Kim is femme fatale; Brat, gangsta bitch; Left Eye, reserved. Elliott, who rhymes and sings the hook—a revise of Kool & the Gang's "Ladies Night"—is last. She paces the floor, looking down, avoiding eyes, but when her turn comes—"Oh what a night / You should be like Missy 'steada bein' like Mike"—this reticence dissipates. She flirts with the camera, her movement like the music: cocky, stop'n'start, losing—then catching—the beat and her balance. Elliott's act is a sly wink, a rest-assured confidence cast toward onlookers. "Missy be killin' shiiiiit..." a guy says rather excitedly.

On the other side of the room, Da Brat is carefully watching Elliott, as have the others. There is an unspoken yet friendly competition among all of them,



Fly girl: Missy "Misdemeanor" Elliott.



All Eyez on Me: Elliott blows up in the video for "The Rain (Supa Dupa Fly)."

and Brat knows it. A Grinch grin spreads slowly across her face and, once the set quiets, she yells threateningly across the room, "Hey! Missy!"

Elliott looks up. Yells back, "Whut?"

Brat laughs. Throws a mo'-power-to-ya fist in the air. "Fuck *you*, nigge!"

There are reasons 25-year-old Missy "Misdemeanor" Elliott commands such respect. Before the take-no-prisoners summer single "The Rain (Supa Dupa Fly)" and her much-anticipeted solo debut *Supa Dupa Fly* CD, she had already compiled an impressive discography, writing and rapping on songs—hits, smesh hits—for folks like Aaliyah, SWV, Ginuwine, 702, Gina Thompson, New Edition, Sean "Puffy" Combs, end Total. "I'm not a conceited person. I'm reel humble, and I'm shy," says the woman who won't sing with anyone in the studio (except the engineer). "But you give yourself credit. I mean, if somebody tell you you look nice, you say thank you, but it's obvious in your mind that you done spent hours trying to get dressed and you know: *This is hot.*"

But just what makes Elliott so hot may not be entirely obvious. She isn't an excaptional rapper, like Lauryn Hill, nor is she a particularly gifted singer, like Erykeh Badu. Missy's strongest statement is her mere existence. She's a Redefining Woman in Hip-Hop, along with folks like Hill, Badu, and Queen Latifah, who fearlessly explore their creativity, who refuse to succumb to body-as-bribe, and whose business is well taken care of, thank you. (Elliott has a record label–production company with Elektra called The Gold Mind, Inc.) Her marketing savvy borders on ingenious; in almost every song on which she's appeared in the last year, she's managed to incorporate her signature "hee-hee-hee-hee-haoow" giggle as well as her "Supa dupa fly" boast. Little wonder the record debuted on the *Billboard* Top 200 at No. 3.

All this, and homegirl wasn't even thinking about making an album. "Nah," she says. "People think i did this for the money, but I was comfortable just writing for people. And i mean *really* comfortable."

Elliott's golden touch—from her scene-stealing early appearances on Gina Thompson's "The Things You Do" (remix) and 702's "Steelo," to later work on hits like Aaliyah's "If Your Girl Only Knew" and SWV's "Can We"—is perhaps rivaled in hip-hop/soul circles only by King Mides himself, Sean "Puffy" Combs. *Moesha* star Brandy wanted in on the Missy action for her new album. Elliott's *Supa* production pertner end friend of 11 years, Tim "Timbaland" Mosely, has a big-deal record, *Welcome to Our World*, due out in the fall. When Elliott entitled one song on *Supa Dupa Fly* "They Don't Wanna F*** Wit Me," she had cause.

But this is why I f*** wit' Missy: Because true to her Portsmouth, Virginia, suth'un-ness, throaty and laid back, sistah says stuff like "I *pull*s up." Because she laughs often. Because she says she smokes hey. Because she admits that "Misdemeanor" just sounded fly. ("That's all. It's nothing deep.") Because she knows crossover doesn't necessarily meen compromise. Because she wears *fingahwaves*. "I mean, everybody wearin' tracks, so I just had to do something different. It was either this or the Jheri Curl." She starts laughing. "And you know it wasn't gone be no Jheri Curl!"

Really, dahling—nevah thought Audrey Hepburn would make it to the Bronx, but here she is now, in the form of Elliott's trademark Alain Mikil/*Breakfast at Tiffany's*–meets–*Mad Max* shades. Paris, honey. Per usual, colored girls heve *such* e way of glamorizing the ghetto, and the river of Elliott admirers pouring out the doors of Nobody Beats the Wiz and rushing down Fordham Road reveels how the fashion "got" pirates from the "ain't got" (i.e., Gucci and Chenel have been here before, taking notes). Lime-green pageboys and purple flips. Trunk jewelry and strategically capped gold teeth. Done nails and *did* hair.

And how proud they are! For hours, while her music plays throughout the store and the Hype Williams–directed video for "The Rain (Supa Dupa Fly)" is on continuous display (you know, the black Michelin Woman clip), Elliott will sign autographs. Kenya will be first in line, a paper-sack-brown little girl of about 12 with fingahwaves in her heir who will stare at Elliott with a certain awe, and half-whisper: "She is so pretty." Men will flirt, women will shake her hand. Two girls will dramatically wipe brows to show Elliott how the 95 degree heat they've braved is affecting them, and sing: "I can't stand the suuuunn / Against my forehead."

Mothers will prod their daughters throughout the day, but one babymuvah in particuler will assure Elliott: "My baby love you!" Baby is up in arms smiling, her eyes transfixed on Elliott's video. Muvah is still going. "I love you, girl! You blew up! Wit' your beeutiful eyes. My boyfriend love your eyes. Ohh, let me teke e picture." Muvah plops baby on Elliott's lap. "I'm nervous!" Muvah continues, snatching Baby up. "Wit' your pretty self! You da bomb! You go, girl! Oh, my baby's crying! She loves your video. She cries when it goes off." Beby is *not* crying, though ectually seems disturbed when the video goes off. Elliott smiles et Beby. Coos "Hiiii." No response from Baby. Elliott waves at Baby. Nothing. Elliott stands up, gets in front of Beby, jumps around, and waves again. Baby, annoyed that her view is obstructed, waves the woman with the big glasses away.

Listening to *Supe Dupa Fly* is a little like going off to see the Wizard. Executive Producer Elliott and Producer Timbaland have crafted a hip-hop "sheets of sound," to crib a Coltrane reference: sleek R&B beats blended with jungle, drum'n'bass, end percussion à la Howard Grimes/Al Jackson on Al Green's 1972 "I'm Glad You're Mine." They sample Jamiroquai's gorgeous herp from "Morning Glory" as well as cartoons and crickets; bust beet box; and incorporate onomatopoetics like "Owwww! You're hounding me" or "Whoop! We tag team." "What people doin' now with samples, we was doin' five years ago," Elliott says. "On *Supa*, there's none of those *tik-kat-tik-kat-tik-katkat* beats like on Aaliyah's *One in a Million*, because Tim noticed that people were starting to do that. It's all good, though," she continues. "People know where it came from."

Mostly, though, there's that undeniable bounce, which is a twist on the Bankhead Bounce dance, which really ain't nothing but an advanced '80s dance called the Prep, which really ain't nothing that Patti LaBelle hasn't been doing with her shoulders for years, which really ain't nothin' but what happens every Sunday in the black Beptist church when someone catches the Holy Ghost.

Still, in today's hip-hip world, where merely walking back end forth across the stege and gripping dicks (real and wished) can be the show, cepturing the movement of Sunday church is no small feat. "Yeah," Elliott laments, "today's [hip-hop concert] is, like, 20 people onstage with you. And everybody's screamin'." No matter: Elliott plans to launch her own arena tour this fall. Stage-show details, for now, are sketchy. When prodded, however, she does reveal this: "I'll be in that big black suit."

Doing what?

She looks. Up in the sky. Points to invisible rafters and says, quite seriously: "Probably flyin'."

The next day, I happen upon Elliott and her cousin Malik in the Village, on Broadway. "We just walkin', smokin' a li'l weed, you know," she says, flashing her packed pipe. We say "Aiiight," I walk on, and five steps later, I happen upon two black women in their early 40s, grabbing a cigarette break. Smiling and leaning out the doorwey, they nod toward Elliott and ask, "Was that her?" "Yes," I say, smiling, watching Elliott's back. One of the ledies weves her hands in the air and says: "*Hoooo!* The Rain!" The other just bounces. ●



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INVASION OF THE POD PEOPLE

Tripod, an unprepossessing Web site in rural Massachusetts devoted to the lives and concerns of the postcollegiate set, has found something the big boys want.
David S. Bennahum learns how to spell i-n-t-e-r-a-c-t-i-v-i-t-y. Photographs by Micheal McLaughlin.

"LET'S SEE," MARGARET GOULD STEWART SAYS, SCROLLING TO THE bottom of the 600 or so e-mail messages in her in-box. "Aha. Look at this one." I read the note. How about a Pagan pod, the e-mailer asks, to discuss alternative religions. "I like that one," Stewart says. Next is a suggestion for a comic-book pod. Stewart likes that one, too. The messages scroll by—sports pod, *The X-Files* pod, entertainment pod, sci-fi pod, a craftsman pod. The list scrolls down, seemingly without end. "We're going to have to sit down," she finally says, "and discuss how to spawn new pods."

Stewart is the 26-year-old design director of Tripod, a Web site, online magazine, and fledgling new-media empire. Six hours ago she launched ScreenLife, a new section in Tripod's online magazine, and the first one to have pods. "Poda," as Stewart said earlier in the day at lunch, "are about grouping material



Deadhead entrepreneur Bo
Peabody: giving the people wha
they want as populist rebe

around a common interest, and publishing yourself. Pods are about moving people toward community building end exploration. Poderators ere in cherge of growing the pod." Every cutting-edge new-medie venture spewns its own newspeak. And Tripod, which focuses on the quotidien (one could even say mundene) concerns of the postcollegiete set, is very cutting edge. But where virtually everyone in the Web business recites mentras about interectivity—about how they are breaking down the old-media model of one-to-meny publishing—in much the same way people on Wall Street like to talk about synergy, Tripod is among the first Web sites to really pull it off. While most content-driven Web outfits brag about luring in 100,000 readers, the two-year-old Tripod can claim, in addition to its more than 400,000 registered users, e remarkable 180,000 people who have created their own Web peges using tools provided by the site. If this momentum holds, Tripod's young creetors stand to collect a rich prize: the creation of a lucrative Web site that doesn't make money from porn, gambling, or sports.

There are a few things you won't find on Tripod: sallvating celebrity profiles, discourses on cigars, funky little coffeehouse icons, or the other hyperkinetic trappings of Gen-X overselling. It's also free of high-profile writers and bigwig columnists. Instead, Tripod emphasizes the practical, in a low-key, sincere way. Holistic cures for herpes, bookshelf-building techniques,






From Left to right: The Tripod Home Page; tech guru Zuckerman (center) with co-workers; a Tripod editorial meeting.

"understending IPOs," running your own business—these are the stories thet give Tripod its jes'-folks character. The online magazine sections ect es mood setter, sheping whet users leter publish on their own.

The megazine's lack of irony, end emphesis on doing it yourself, grooves well with the ethos of the Web, with its ingreined bies egainst snooty medie professionals issuing edicts from high ebove Madison Avenue. "There is e reel arrogance emong old-medie types," says Omar Wasow, 26, founder of the New York Online Web site. "They think there is nothing to be said for letting the audience run the show." There are no signs of that attitude at Tripod. Everything about its enormous Williamstown offices, in western Massachusetts—with bleached wood floors, open desks, and big industrial windows on the top floor of a three-story factory that still, on the first end second floors, manufactures power cords—and its 43 friendly employees in shorts and sandals pleads *we ere not errogant old-media types*. It also helps that most of them are in their 20s, greppling with the same problems Tripod addresses. "I have friends who are terrified of buying furniture," Emma Taylor says. Taylor, in plaid shorts and e tank top, is originlly from England, and she's the editor of Tripod's Living section. "My friend freeked out when he hed to buy e bed. He didn't know how." Taylor quickly assigned stories demystifying bed and furniture shopping.

This utiliterien epproech has made Tripod one of the most popular independent medie sites on the Web, with about one million page views e day. According to Medie Matrix, the Nielsens of the online world, Tripod is now the 19th most visited site on the Web. Tripod draws far more traffic than Slate, Salon, or Feed, better-known online megezines with epproximately 50,000 regular readers apiece. Money has flowed, too. Tripod's boy-wonder founder, Bo Peabody, 26, who has run the company since his sophomore year in college, hes raised $14 million from outside investors. Peabody's job experience before Tripod was as an after-school lawn mower and snow blower, but he seems to have an instinctive grasp of the Web's populist, inclusive gestalt. "Bo promoted the self-publishing model very early on, before people were interested in promoting community on the Internet," says New York Online's Wasow, who hes crossed paths with Peebody over the yeers on the new-media circuit of television talk shows, venture capital conferences, end trade fairs. "We are seeing now thet there ere reel rewerds coming to those who stuck by the model of the eudience producing the content."

"I find a lot of the 'professional' stuff out there to be dull in its polishing. Without self-published homepages and fanpages, the Internet would be a dull end desolate piece," Michael Travers says. Travers has had a homepege on Tripod's site since almost the beginning—1995. Travers updates his page et leest once e week, sometimes every dey. Titled "Offy's Little Nook on the Net," it's an unpretentious jeunt through Travers's personal life. "I'm out of school for the summer," Travers warns on his homepege, next to e smiling photo of himself, "So my page won't be chenging much. Feel free to contact me still end I will get beck to you; it might just teke e while." From there you can reed his review of the Monkees' 30th enniversery concert end e Bareneked Ladies show. Travers also has e chat room, built using Tripod's chat tools. More links lead to pages ebout his favorite videogames, his résumé, end e longer description of his summer plans. There's also a link to other friends' pages on Tripod. For Travers, the best part of the Net is other people, and the pages they produce. "There are some cool officiel music sites," Travers tells me, by e-mail, "but usually that's only because they have put a lot of money into their sites end modeled them after what people like in self-published pages. Official band pages ere getting ultremodern because their pages were being outdone by fans."

TRIPOD LETS THE AUDIENCE RUN THE SHOW

It's loyal users like Michael Travers who are crucial to Tripod's expension. For one, they're cheap. Tripod doesn't have to pay "content providers" like Travers, but it gets to rack up the page views needed to attract ad dollars. Still, Tripod would spin off into chaos were it not for the site's paid editors who, like hosts at a very large and complex cocktail party, have to set the mood, and ensure that the guests stay as long as possible. it's a risky combination. Tripod's challenge is to keep the twentysomething theme focused, so advertisers will be happy, while letting their reader/writers "do their own thing."

"When we first offered member homepages for free, we had no idea the service would become so popular," says Ethan Zuckerman, Tripod's high-tech guru. "We created a simple tool to get pages online, end we thought,



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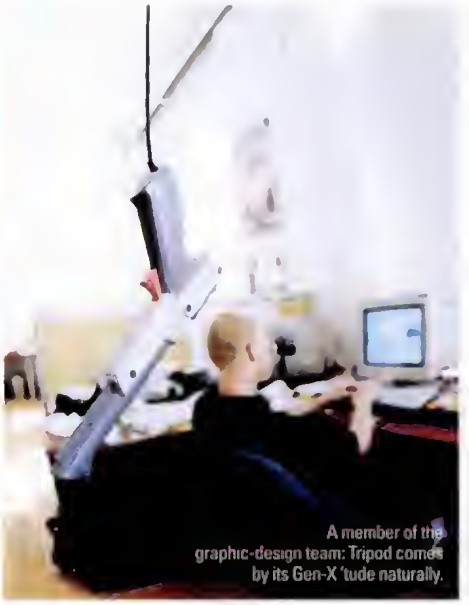
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PEABODY IS THE DARLING OF THE VENTURE CAPITAL CIRCUIT

Why not give it away and see what happens?" Based on word of mouth, 80,000 people built homepages within the first year the service was offered. Like most things at Tripod, the service was created because, as Zuckermen puts it, "our job is to think of cool stuff we think the users want, throw it out there, and see what happens." The response to personal publishing made it clear that people thought this was extremely cool indeed. Since advertising is the main source of money for Tripod, the company decided to put ads on the bottom of each user's page. "We told our users that we could not *give* this service away and not make any money off of it," Zuckerman says. A survey was taken, asking whether users would take down their homepages and desert Tripod if ads were to be part of the equation. Eighty percent said they would stay. "People understood the deal," Zuckerman says.

If Tripod does one thing very well, it is listening to users. Every day, the Membership Services department receives about 1,200 e-mails, asking for technical help or pointing out some offensive homepage they think should be taken down or suggesting improvements to the site. These letters are given a lot of attention, and it's hard to say who is designing Tripod—Stewart and her staff, who put together the graphics and links, or the more than 400,000 users who, either directly by e-mail, or indirectly through the path they take into the site, tell Tripod what they want.

Tripod has learned to give people what they want in part because Bo Peabody is good at it. Much of Tripod's ability to let go of carefully crafted plans, and follow the course of an unexpected good idea, is defined by Peabody. Six feet tall and blond, he



A member of the graphic-design team: Tripod comes by its Gen-X 'tude naturally.

exudes confidence, mingled with a bit of backwoods preppiness. His sentences are peppered with high-tech venture capital jargon—"net net," "run rate," "tranche"—and a lot of verve. He is the darling of the venture capital circuit, and he revels in giving the adults what they want—access to real, live kids. Peabody, foremost, seems to be having an extremely good time. "This is media from the heart," he says.

In 1991, when Peabody first hed the idea for Tri-

BLUESMOBILE.



However he damn well pleases. That's how John Lee Hooker listens to Howlin' Wolf. Here, he's chosen an Infinity car audio system. Friend and fellow guitar-slinger Robert Cray has chosen to navigate. Once again, one of the great companies of Harman International has provided the world's finest audio equipment.

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Brett Hershey (who is now a ballet dancer and no longer works at Tripod) came up with the idea. As it developed, the first mutation took place right then. They decided to use computers to deliver the information, perhaps, they imagined, by creating an online service of their own for postgrads. Peabody's economics teacher, Dick Sabot, was impressed enough to help them create a long-term market study. In Peabody's sophomore year, the three formed Tripod (thus the name) and began raising money. Flexibility served Peabody well. Instead of forming his own online service, or pitching it as a special section on America Online, Peabody came across a demonstration of the Web in the spring of 1994 and told Sabot, who is now the company's chairman, that they had found their medium.

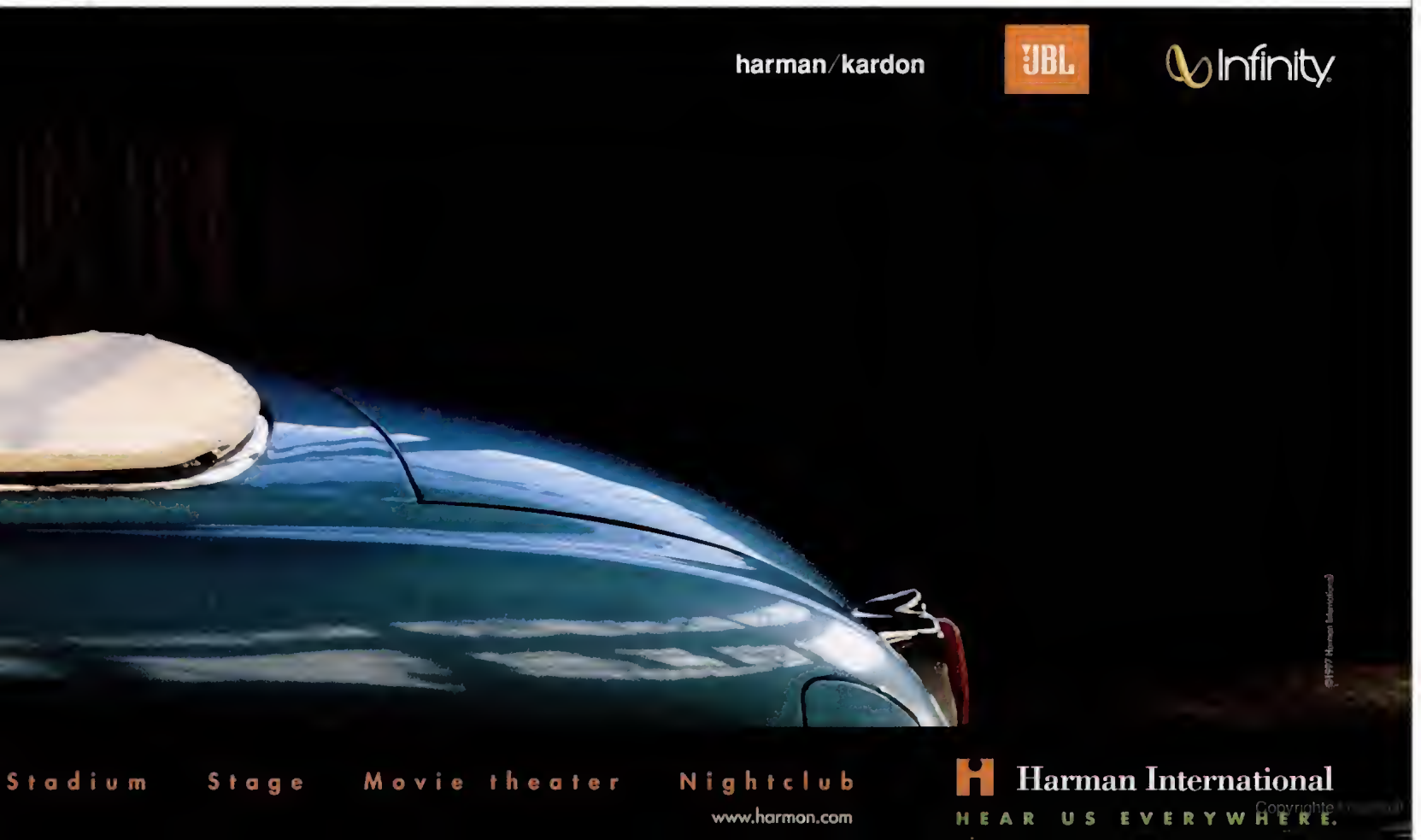
Going with the flow is what the Grateful Dead did, Peabody points out, and Tripod, he says, is modeled after the Dead's social ecology: thousands of people making a living, getting inspiration, doing their thing, in the environment the band created. Peabody also drew inspiration from the Whole Earth Catalog—the ur-DIY guidebook—which, in the late '60s and early '70s, championed the ethos of building your own furniture and home, running your own radio station, publishing your own books. "The Web is re-creating that energy," Peabody says. "The entrepreneurial spirit of this generation is out of control."

As Tripod gains speed—ScreenLife was conceived and launched within three months—the staff has no choice but to trust the users. On a small level, that means using "moderators" who do not work for Tripod. Margaret Stewart intends to recruit volunteers. On a bigger level, it means figuring out how to let all these people govern themselves. For now, as with most online communities, the "government" has been a form of benign dictatorship. Every day, staffers wade through complaints and administer rough justice, pulling down homepages that violate "community standards." But with the membership staff currently supporting 80,000 users, this arrangement ultimately will no longer "scale." To deal with it, Tripod's solution is an ingenious one. Peabody plans to break up Tripod, have some pods spawn Web sites of their own, which in turn could spawn pods, which in turn could break off once again, always shearing away from the hive when critical mass is reached. Tripod hopes its organically proliferating sites will make it a very big new-media holding company. It is worth pointing out that Tripod today has as many members as the entire Internet did ten years ago.

Still, not everything works organically. "We face this constant tension between freedom of speech, fostering communities, and running a business," says Tung Pham, director of Membership Services. I ask how they decide what to delete. That, I am told, is mainly Jason Macauley's job. "It is usually clear the moment I look at it," Macauley says. "The community mostly regulates itself," Pham adds. "Yeah," Macauley interjects, smiling. "*We* are the judiciary." As he describes it, the distinctions appear clear enough: Porn, stolen software, con games, and hate speech get removed. "The context of a page is really important," Macauley says. Naked-children pictures come up as an example—if they're pictures of yourself on your page, it's okay. The same picture on someone else's page might not be. Macauley, who graduated last year from North Adams State College with a degree in philosophy (specializing in ethics, he points out), deletes about 30 accounts a day for violations. Since there aren't enough Macauleys to go around, Tripod plans to do what it does best, see how the users want to deal with these issues.

"The users are going to have to learn to police themselves," Pham says. "We are going to create some sort of judicial system." No online community of Tripod's size has ever managed to do such a thing, and the idea comes off a bit like *Lord of the Flies*. For now, though, business continues as usual. At Macauley's desk, I watch as he shows me the e-mails he gets. They are sorted in folders named CONDUCT, COPYRIGHT (VIOLATIONS), HATE, NETIQUETTE, PIRACY, PORN, TATTLETALES. Tattletales are people who complain too much. I stare over Macauley's shoulder at one message.

"This is a tough call," Macauley says. "I mean, a nude yoga page." He smiles, and twists around in his office chair to look at me. The message has a sweet tone to it: Would it be all right to put up a homepage with pictures of people practicing yoga in the nude? It's just for his friends. Macauley turns him down. I ask him why. He looks up at the ceiling, thinking about it. "John Locke said that only through the warfare of ideas will truth emerge." He looks back down. "Nude yoga," he adds, "will not contribute to that in a meaningful way." ●

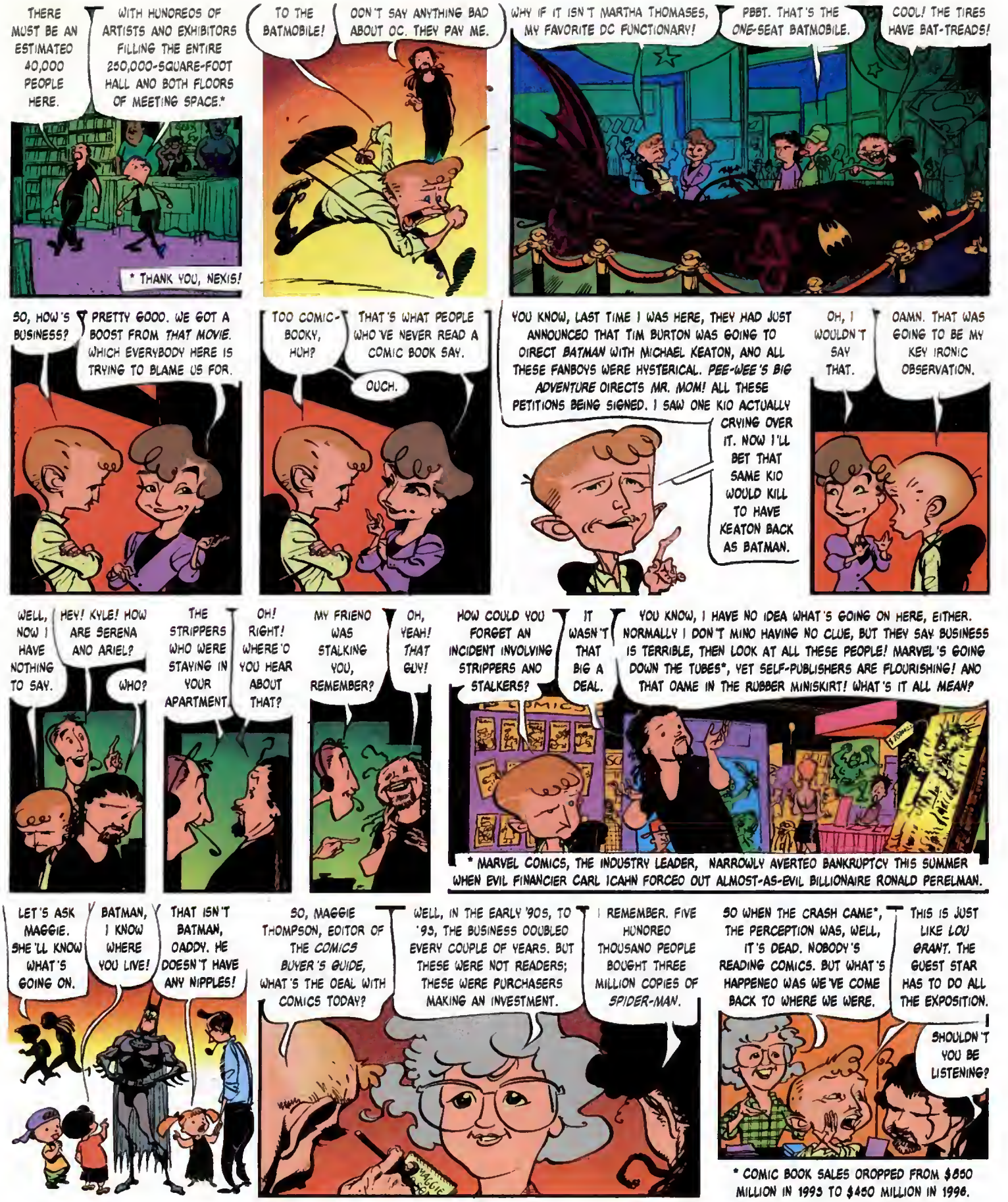


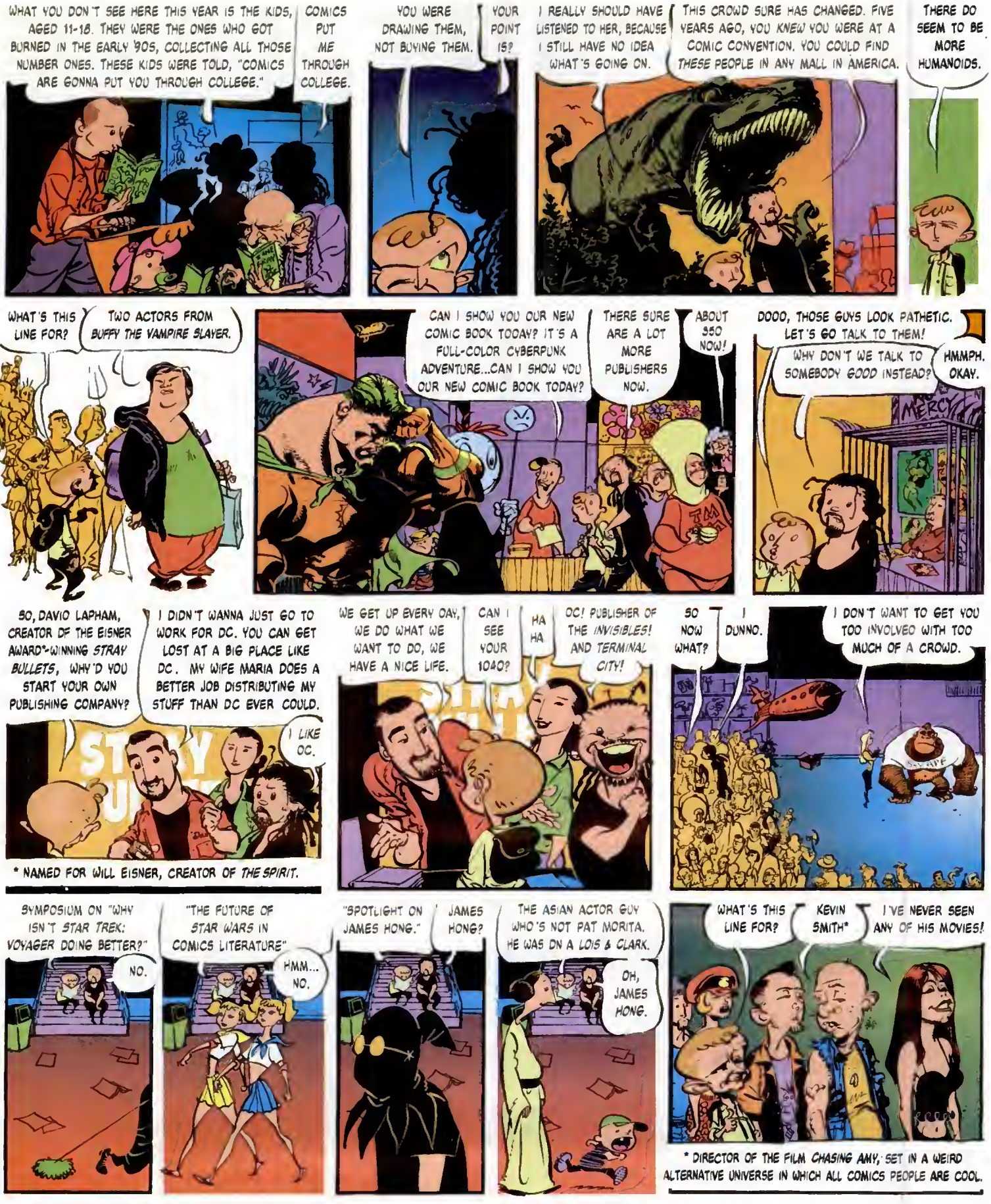
STRIPMALL

Seeking answers to why a once vibrant biz is in such turmoil, two comics veterans voyage to San Diego for Comi-Con '97, the Geek Nation's answer to Lollapalooza.

Illustrations: Kyle Baker.
Text: Kyle Baker and Larry Doyle.




THERE MUST BE AN ESTIMATED 40,000 PEOPLE HERE.
WITH HUNDREDS OF ARTISTS AND EXHIBITORS FILLING THE ENTIRE 250,000-SQUARE-FOOT HALL AND BOTH FLOORS OF MEETING SPACE.*
* THANK YOU, NEXIS!
TO THE BATMOBILE!
DON'T SAY ANYTHING BAD ABOUT DC. THEY PAY ME.
WHY IF IT ISN'T MARTHA THOMASES, MY FAVORITE DC FUNCTIONARY!
PBBT. THAT'S THE ONE-SEAT BATMOBILE.
COOL! THE TIRES HAVE BAT-TREADS!
SO, HOW'S BUSINESS?
PRETTY GOOD. WE GOT A BOOST FROM THAT MOVIE. WHICH EVERYBODY HERE IS TRYING TO BLAME US FOR.
TOO COMIC-BOOKY, HUH?
THAT'S WHAT PEOPLE WHO'VE NEVER READ A COMIC BOOK SAY.
OUCH.
YOU KNOW, LAST TIME I WAS HERE, THEY HAD JUST ANNOUNCED THAT TIM BURTON WAS GOING TO DIRECT BATMAN WITH MICHAEL KEATON, AND ALL THESE FANBOYS WERE HYSTERICAL. PEE-WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE DIRECTS MR. MOM! ALL THESE PETITIONS BEING SIGNED. I SAW ONE KID ACTUALLY CRYING OVER IT. NOW I'LL BET THAT SAME KID WOULD KILL TO HAVE KEATON BACK AS BATMAN.
OH, I WOULDN'T SAY THAT.
DAMN. THAT WAS GOING TO BE MY KEY IRONIC OBSERVATION.
WELL, NOW I HAVE NOTHING TO SAY.
HEY! KYLE! HOW ARE SERENA AND ARIEL?
WHO?
THE STRIPPERS WHO WERE STAYING IN YOUR APARTMENT
OH! RIGHT! WHERE'D YOU HEAR ABOUT THAT?
MY FRIEND WAS STALKING YOU, REMEMBER?
OH, YEAH! THAT GUY!
HOW COULD YOU FORGET AN INCIDENT INVOLVING STRIPPERS AND STALKERS?
IT WASN'T THAT BIG A DEAL.
YOU KNOW, I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT'S GOING ON HERE, EITHER. NORMALLY I DON'T MIND HAVING NO CLUE, BUT THEY SAY BUSINESS IS TERRIBLE, THEN LOOK AT ALL THESE PEOPLE! MARVEL'S GOING DOWN THE TUBES*, YET SELF-PUBLISHERS ARE FLOURISHING! AND THAT DAME IN THE RUBBER MINISKIRT! WHAT'S IT ALL MEAN?
* MARVEL COMICS, THE INDUSTRY LEADER, NARROWLY AVERTED BANKRUPTCY THIS SUMMER WHEN EVIL FINANCIER CARL ICAHN FORCED OUT ALMOST-AS-EVIL BILLIONAIRE RONALD PERELMAN.
LET'S ASK MAGGIE. SHE'LL KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON.
BATMAN, I KNOW WHERE YOU LIVE!
THAT ISN'T BATMAN, DADDY. HE DOESN'T HAVE ANY NIPPLES!
SO, MAGGIE THOMPSON, EDITOR OF THE COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE, WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH COMICS TODAY?
WELL, IN THE EARLY '90S, TO '93, THE BUSINESS DOUBLED EVERY COUPLE OF YEARS. BUT THESE WERE NOT READERS; THESE WERE PURCHASERS MAKING AN INVESTMENT.
I REMEMBER. FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND PEOPLE BOUGHT THREE MILLION COPIES OF SPIDER-MAN.
SO WHEN THE CRASH CAME*, THE PERCEPTION WAS, WELL, IT'S DEAD. NOBODY'S READING COMICS. BUT WHAT'S HAPPENED WAS WE'VE COME BACK TO WHERE WE WERE.
THIS IS JUST LIKE LOU GRANT. THE GUEST STAR HAS TO DO ALL THE EXPOSITION.
SHOULDN'T YOU BE LISTENING?
MAGGIE
* COMIC BOOK SALES DROPPED FROM $850 MILLION IN 1993 TO $450 MILLION IN 1996.


WHAT YOU DON'T SEE HERE THIS YEAR IS THE KIDS, AGED 11-18. THEY WERE THE ONES WHO GOT BURNED IN THE EARLY '90S, COLLECTING ALL THOSE NUMBER ONES. THESE KIDS WERE TOLD, "COMICS ARE GONNA PUT YOU THROUGH COLLEGE."
COMICS PUT ME THROUGH COLLEGE.
YOU WERE DRAWING THEM, NOT BUYING THEM.
YOUR POINT IS?
I REALLY SHOULD HAVE LISTENED TO HER, BECAUSE I STILL HAVE NO IDEA WHAT'S GOING ON.
THIS CROWD SURE HAS CHANGED. FIVE YEARS AGO, YOU KNEW YOU WERE AT A COMIC CONVENTION. YOU COULD FIND THESE PEOPLE IN ANY MALL IN AMERICA.
THERE DO SEEM TO BE MORE HUMANOIDS.
WHAT'S THIS LINE FOR?
TWO ACTORS FROM BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER.
CAN I SHOW YOU OUR NEW COMIC BOOK TODAY? IT'S A FULL-COLOR CYBERPUNK ADVENTURE...CAN I SHOW YOU OUR NEW COMIC BOOK TODAY?
THERE SURE ARE A LOT MORE PUBLISHERS NOW.
ABOUT 350 NOW!
DOOO, THOSE GUYS LOOK PATHETIC. LET'S GO TALK TO THEM!
WHY DON'T WE TALK TO SOMEBODY GOOD INSTEAD?
HMMPH. OKAY.
MERCY
SO, DAVIO LAPHAM, CREATOR OF THE EISNER AWARD*-WINNING STRAY BULLETS, WHY'D YOU START YOUR OWN PUBLISHING COMPANY?
I DIDN'T WANNA JUST GO TO WORK FOR DC. YOU CAN GET LOST AT A BIG PLACE LIKE DC. MY WIFE MARIA DOES A BETTER JOB DISTRIBUTING MY STUFF THAN DC EVER COULD.
I LIKE OC.
* NAMED FOR WILL EISNER, CREATOR OF THE SPIRIT.
WE GET UP EVERY DAY, WE DO WHAT WE WANT TO DO, WE HAVE A NICE LIFE.
CAN I SEE YOUR 1040?
HA HA
OC! PUBLISHER OF THE INVISIBLES! AND TERMINAL CITY!
SO NOW WHAT?
I DUNNO.
I DON'T WANT TO GET YOU TOO INVOLVED WITH TOO MUCH OF A CROWD.
SYMPOSIUM ON "WHY ISN'T STAR TREK: VOYAGER DOING BETTER?"
NO.
"THE FUTURE OF STAR WARS IN COMICS LITERATURE"
HMM... NO.
"SPOTLIGHT ON JAMES HONG."
JAMES HONG?
THE ASIAN ACTOR GUY WHO'S NOT PAT MORITA. HE WAS ON A LOIS & CLARK.
OH, JAMES HONG.
WHAT'S THIS LINE FOR?
KEVIN SMITH*
I'VE NEVER SEEN ANY OF HIS MOVIES!
* DIRECTOR OF THE FILM CHASING AMY, SET IN A WEIRD ALTERNATIVE UNIVERSE IN WHICH ALL COMICS PEOPLE ARE COOL.


MR. BAKER! YOUR WORK INSPIRED ME TO DRAW COMICS! I'D LIKE YOU TO HAVE A FREE COPY OF MY BOOK!
I ACCEPT!
SEE THAT, LARRY? THANKS TO ME, THIS FELLOW'S GOT A BOOK OUT WITH FANTAGRAPHICS! I'M HIS INSPIRATION!
CHRIST! HE'S STICKING A HARPOON UP A CHILD'S ASS WHILE COMMITTING SUICIDE BY BLOWING HIS OWN BRAINS OUT!
SPEAKING OF FANTAGRAPHICS, IN A DEPRESSED MARKET LIKE THIS, HOW CAN A CUTTING-EDGE INDEPENDENT PUBLISHER LIKE THAT MANAGE TO MAKE ENDS MEET?
BITCH IN HEAT
BUTTFUCKUE U.
SEX BOMBS
CRYSTAL BALLS
BIG TOP BONDAGE
VIXXEN
GABY & THE GOAT
SIXTY NINE
BLAZING FOXHOLES
DOUBLE-ENDED DILDO, APPARENTLY.
TAKE YOUR PICTURE WITH HELLINA. $5
WE DON'T SELL THE HELLINA COMIC BOOK HERE. SOME OF THE PLACES THAT SELL COMICS MIGHT STILL HAVE SOME.
WHO PUBLISHES IT?
I DON'T KNOW.
FRIENDS OF LULU? WHAT'S SHE DYING OF?
NO, WE'RE JUST AN ORGANIZATION THAT'S TRYING TO MAKE COMICS MORE WOMEN-FRIENDLY. COMIC BOOK STORES ARE VERY SCARY PLACES FOR WOMEN TO WALK INTO; WE JUST WANT TO GIVE STORE OWNERS SOME TIPS ON HOW TO MAKE THEIR PLACES MORE WOMEN-FRIENDLY.
FRIENDS OF Lulu
LIKE?
NOT HAVE THE PORNO STUFF RIGHT IN THE FRONT.
LOOK, I'M ON THEIR "RECOMMENDED" LIST! WHERE'S THAT DAME IN THE RUBBER MINISKIRT?
"HOW TO PICK UP GIRLS IF YOU'RE A COMIC BOOK GEEK"*? GEEKS ACTUALLY BUY THIS?
MOST PEOPLE HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOR ABOUT IT. WE'VE ONLY GOTTEN ONE PERSON WHO WAS PUT OFF BY IT.
* BY RICH KOSLOWSKI, 3 FINGER PRINTS
A GEEK?
YEAH, I TOLD HIM HE WAS IN DENIAL.
SO YOU'RE HIS WIFE?
YES.
HEH. HOW'D YOU GET SUCH AN ATTRACTIVE WIFE IF YOU'RE SUCH A GEEK?
SEE, THE BOOK WORKS.
I'LL GIVE YOU SIX BUCKS FOR TWO OF THEM.
SOLD.
CAN YOU DRAW A BART FOR ME?
WELL, IF IT ISN'T JOHN MOORE, OUR OLD FRIEND AND A 15-YEAR VETERAN OF THE COMICS INDUSTRY!*
HEY.
SAY SOMETHING INCISIVE, AND WE'LL BUY YOU LUNCH.
OKAY.
* HE WROTE A BATMAN AND SOME OTHER STUFF.
LAST TIME WE WERE ALL HERE, WE TOOK THE TRAM DOWN TO TIJUANA AND HAD OUR PICTURE TAKEN ON A BURRO! THEN WE ACCIDENTALLY WENT TO A WHOREHOUSE!
I DON'T REMEMBER ANY WHOREHOUSE.
I DID ALL SORTS OF GREAT DRAWINGS ON MY TABLECLOTH LAST NIGHT. WHY DIDN'T THEY PUT THEM UP ON THE WALL?
SO, JOHN MOORE, COMICS VETERAN, WHAT'S THE STATE OF THE INDUSTRY TODAY?
COMICS AREN'T JUST FOR KIDS ANYMORE!
BUT SERIOUSLY.
IT'S THE SAME.
LOOK, I DREW BATMAN!
THE END!

sucker Ph.D.'s

During the past decade, thousands of college graduates swarmed into graduate schools on the promise of easy tenure and a well-remunerated life of the mind. It never happened. Meet the new overeducated underclass.

By Eric Weisbard.
Photographs by Michael R. Lewis.

THIS IS NOT A HORROR STORY—NOT EXACTLY. Every morning, from September to June, my friend Jesse Berrett gets up at 6:30, carpools to San Francisco University High School, and teaches a day's worth of history classes. The progressive private school was designed by a renowned local architect, and its open-air plazas and hilly vistas resemble, in miniature, the nicest college campuses. A bumper sticker in the classroom where Berrett teaches reads: QUESTION ASSUMPTIONS. His class—a survey of recent U.S. history—has


GENERAL ELECTRIC
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fewer then e dozen students.

There's just one catch. In the fall of 1988, Berrett entered the University of Californie at Berkeley history department, eesily emong the five best in the country, in pursuit of his Ph.D. He took classes for a couple of years, spent months grinding in preparation for an orel exem before five professors, then researched end wrote a several-hundred-page dissertation. In June, 1996, eight years of genteel poverty leter, he received his doctorate—and agreed to accept e high-school teaching post thet doesn't even require e mester's degree. Whet choice was there? Caught up in the worst academic job market in a generation, he hed elreedy spent two years sending out applications without even receiving an interview.

It was nothing personal. More than one third of all new history Ph.D.s will never find full-time teaching work, according to the Americen Historical Association's own newsletter, paltry numbers given the memmoth emount of time you heve to invest to discover your fete. Across ell fields, 40,000-plus students will receive their doctorates this yeer. Few heve illusions about what awaits them: a handful of good jobs, each sought by hundreds of applicents; university presses less end less willing to publish the ecedemic books needed to gein tenure; protracted separetions from loved ones. Grad school, en option nearly every halfway ideelistic college student contemplates, hes become en invitation to purgatory.

His dissertation completed, Berrett faced a variety of options, all worrisome. He could spend another year polishing his manuscript toward publishability and scrounging for more teeching essistantships—the eternal grad student. He could seek pert-time teaching positions throughout the Bay Area, end eern less than what he got as a veteren Berkeley teaching assistant. He could apply for a one- or two-year postdoctorate fellowship somewhere, or e simi-ler-length teeching gig; both likely to require a separation from his wife or her abandoning a good job for a temporary relocation. A postdoc, or even gypsy scholership, would have pleased prospective university employers more than teaching high school—Berrett risks looking like second-cless goods. But he'd hed enough of being the good, suffering student. "I wanted to get my life going," he says now.

And so he did. I watch him teaching a class on the connection between the Cold War and '50s suburbia, throwing in e combinetion of current references (*King of the Hill*, Steven Spielberg, his beloved Stephen King) and learned allusions (Devid Riesman's notion of "marginal differentiation"), bonding with the students end stretching them. "I feel lucky in e lot of ways," he tells me later. "I once spent six months Xeroxing downtown. This is e good job. I have smert kids to teech. The school supports professional development, so they paid for me to go to a conference. But what I want for my future doesn't exactly fit with the job I have right now. I'm not sure how thet's going to work out."

A third yeer of fruitless searching for e tenure-treck position has come and gone—this time he got two interviews but neither penned out. Meanwhile, two university presses agreed to publish his manuscript—he opted for the University of Californie Press. Perheps now, with not only e completed dissertetion but e prestigious book deel in hend, he'll heve success. If a Jesse Berrett, coming out of Berkeley with a manifest record of accomplishment, can't get e decent job, why is enyone else even bothering with e Ph.D.?



Stanford professor Michael Thompson: He did grad school right and got away with it.

The research university model (originelly copied from Germany)—with its graduate doctoral programs and autonomous, professionalized disciplines—hes been established in this country for more than a century. It's en apprentice system, e compect: Your adviser end other professors mentor you, and if you pass the required hurdles of scholarship—and to a far lesser extent, teaching—their recommendations get you e tenure-track job. The ideal was academic freedom—a republic of knowledge, accessible to all. Between 1945 and 1970 the doors really did fly open, first to Jews and other white male ethnics, and ultimately to women and some minority groups as well. Research institutions swelled in size. The professoriate quintupled.

Inevitably, too many wanted in on this particular variant of the good life. And when the job market crashed in 1971—among history Ph.D.'s elone, there were a reported 2,300 applicants for a mere 155 job openings—stories of Ph.D.'s driving taxis became folklore. In fact, Jesse Berrett's father, a musicologist, finished his Ph.D. in 1974, but couldn't get work and had to sell Amway products before finally finding a stable post years later.

The current job crisis isn't quite as severe, but what galls todey's unemployed is that they were actually *encouraged* to enter grad school. For this, we can blame William Bowen, the man elmost single-handedly responsible for ruining the lives of graduate students like Berrett. In 1989 Bowen, former president of Princeton University and head of the prestigious Mellon Foundation, announced that an expected wave of faculty retirements beginning in the mid-'90s would threaten the health of higher education unless more col-



The University of South Carolina's Kim Kellison: Though jobs remain elusive, she's glad she went, anyway.

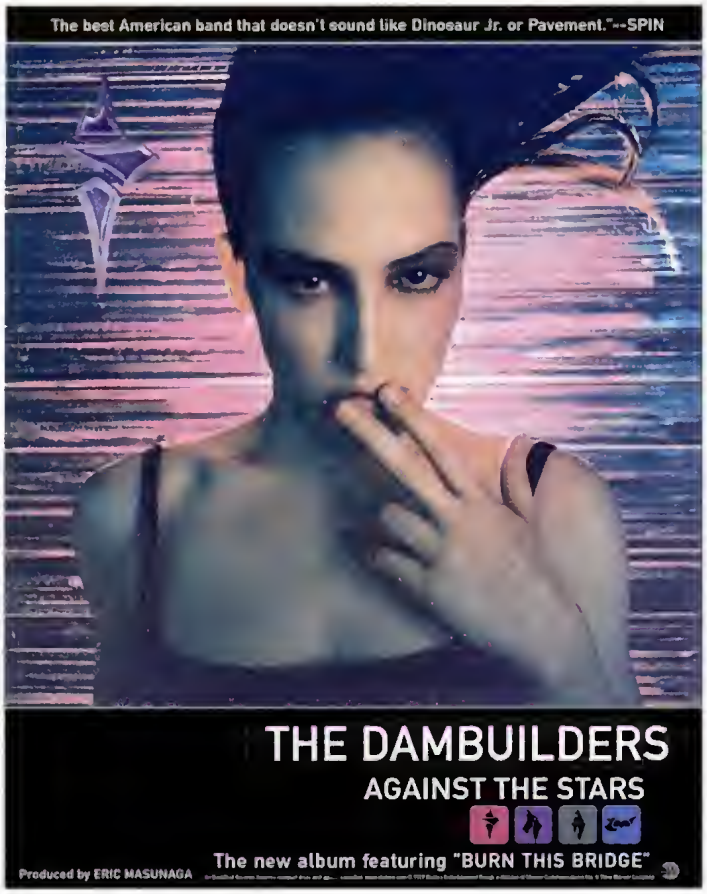
BY 1995, NEW ENROLLMENTS IN GRADUATE HISTORY PROGRAMS WERE UP BY 50 PERCENT.

lege students could be persuaded to apply for doctoral degrees. It wasn't a hard sell. Tens of thousands, eager for noncorporate alternatives as the Reagan years ended, took what suddenly seemed like a safe, useful, and—at the time—trendy path. By 1995, new enrollments in graduate history programs were up 50 percent; English enrollments were up 60 percent.

The jobs never materialized. "They were certainly right about the retirements," Berrett says. "They were just wrong about the replacements." Blame it on a complex of factors: the Bush era's recession and cutbacks in education spending prompted by conservative attacks on "tenured radicals." But what really hurt was the way schools responded—with systematic downsizing no different from those corporations the students were trying to avoid. Encouraging pricey faculty members to retire, administrators relied ever more heavily on what one academic calls "disposable faculty": nontenured instructors who work cheap, often with no benefits.

Graduate employees (though universities still quaintly insisted on calling them students) became an indispensable part of the new economic equation, teaching most classes requiring face-to-face contact—discussion sections, thesis seminars, remedial courses, labs. Even now, with the U.S. many years into an economic recovery, there are no signs that schools are willing to quit the penny-pinching. The old, romanticized adviser/student relationship—the compact—has become a way to cloak the creation of an academic underclass. As activist prof Cary Nelson bluntly puts it in his book *Manifesto of a Tenured Radical*: "Apprenticeship has turned into exploitation."

I was one of those kids William Bowen helped suck into grad school, arriving at Berkeley's history department in 1989 and soon befriending Berrett (the guy wearing a Dead Milkmen T-shirt). For the next six years I wavered between doctoral duties and magazine work, dropping out completely in the summer of 1995. The job market was a factor—who'd have thought rock criticism a better career track?—but so were my conflicting feelings about academia that made real learning possible, but only if you wanted to study certain things, in certain ways. When literary historian Gerald Graff writes about the hiring crisis, "I think we may be seeing radical changes in, if not the eclipse of, the Ph.D. as we have known it," my impulse is both to mourn and gloat.





Graduate school—theoretically, anyway—is a meritocracy: Do the work, get good grades, receive a job that lets you think for a living. But there's a reason you need five letters of recommendation to apply for most positions: Excellence, when it comes to academic work, is highly subjective, varying subfield by subfield. You are judged not by quantity of work, or grades, but rather by whether you are deemed worthy to belong in the academic community. Student life revolves around indefinables. What if the famous professor you came to work with can't stand you, or leaves? Will that nicer, lesser-known prof have the juice to secure you employment? What if your preferred area isn't established, or is in decline? If you don't get that fellowship, are you out of the ranks of the predestined elect?

The pressures to fit in are tremendous, and in a tight job market, there's no room for creative nonconformity, for following your ideas where they lead. Berrett, for instance, had several strikes against him from the start. He had a respected but not particularly powerful adviser, didn't win a prestigious dissertation fellowship, and chose a risky topic—'50s masculinity as seen through pop culture figures like Liberace and Mickey Spillane. "I fall between the cracks," he remarks far more calmly than I could have when I was in the same boat. "I'm not traditional enough to be, 'He does political history, we know what that is.' And I'm not one of those theory guys."

THE PRESSURES TO FIT IN ARE TREMENDOUS, AND IN A TIGHT JOB MARKET, THERE'S NO ROOM FOR CREATIVE NONCONFORMITY.

He was also, of his Ph.D. peer group, among the most intellectually wide-ranging—but writing about books and music for magazines (including SPIN) didn't help his standing when history committees looked over his résumé. Aspiring academics are discouraged from developing outside their own departments—it takes time (with swift completion of the Ph.D. now an increasingly important measure of success) and it isn't "serious." As a result, each academic subspecialty established enough to get its partisans hired circles the wagons, defining its own standards, promoting insular thinking and writing. Worse, a student coming out of such training who doesn't get a job isn't prepared (and may actually be impaired) for any other type of intellectual work.

All professions have their jargon, their arcane codes. Yet from an employment perspective, academia isn't much of a profession anymore. In 1996, Berkeley's history department placed in jobs slightly more than half of the students who received Ph.D.'s—and not all were tenure-track positions. That's the department's worst performance in a dozen years, since the last crisis ended. Berkeley students now accept offers wherever they can find them. Of the American history grad students who started about the same time I did, two older students, highly driven, found work at football colleges; a third is at Central Washington University after two one-year appointments. One man is still in temporary-postings limbo; a woman unearthed an opportunity in New Zealand; another graduate works as a high-school curriculum coordinator as he searches for a more suitable job; one switched fields to mass communication; four others are still finishing. Not precisely stellar results.

The two minority students who've gone on the market both found jobs: one at a state school, the other—the most successful of my cohorts—at a much-esteemed small private college. I've heard bellyaching about this latter student. If he's Latino, as he apparently claimed to be in his job application, it's not apparent. But if the card had been mine to play, I'd have played it too. Thanks to affirmative action, minority liberal arts grad students are allowed the kind of latitude all grad students would love to have.

It may be a measure of the humanities' lack of social and material status, but minorities are rarer here than in almost any other part of academia. Only three percent of new humanities Ph.D.'s are black, four percent are Hispanic,

and five percent are Asian. The need is real, and as the University of California's recent experiment with ending affirmative action has proven, removing racial preferences raises the specter of a total whiteout.

But that doesn't make the disparities any less glaring. One Latino friend of mine, not done with her dissertation, turned down tenure at the University of Michigan, a great job, to continue working for the *Daily News* in New York, a reporting post she'd been given at least in part because Pete Hamill smartly wanted to up his paper's coverage of Dominican-Americans.

Then there's Michael Thompson, another Berkeley history grad student, who was hired by Stanford despite the kind of polyglot track record that would have endangered a white grad student. The dreadlock-wearing, indie-rock-admiring Thompson, 34, a son of "upper-middle-class parents," waited many more semesters then most greduete students to take his qualifying exams, switched around his dissertation topic (popular portrayals of African-American women as maids and mammies), and was given a post by Stanford long before finishing. "I might have taken a long time, but I think I did pretty good work," he says a little defensively. "I do have a sense of survivor's guilt, but i feel like there's so few African-American scholars, so few doing African-American history." He aiso argues: "Affirmative action doesn't work real strongly at the tenure ievel. It might get you in the door, but it doesn't keep you there."

Not oniy wouidn't i question the merit of Thompson's work, I admire the reason he was siow to complete: poiiticai activism, including a spot on the Association of Graduate Student Employees executive board. Terrific at connecting cuiture, poiitics, and history, the world outside with the world of books, he's the kind of professor I'd like to see more of—forget rece. More grad students should get to lead such diverse lives without fear of committing career suicide. Thompson captures the dilemma: "I deserve this job—as do lots of people who don't have jobs."

But since the jobs aren't there, what's to be done? Nothing, apparently. At Berkeiey, the history department admission committee decided this year, in a split vote, not to reduce the number of grad students accepted—which, if everyone did it, would eventually ease job pressures. "I think we should have admitted fewer," says James Kettner, Berkeley's longtime overseer of graduate history education. "There was a kind of double standard being employed. One member of the committee argued that we need more T.A.s, so we should admit, and another said it doesn't matter what the market is—that's their responsibility, not ours."

Joseph Cerny, Dean of the Graduate Division at Berkeley, with the cold-warrior demeanor of the nuclear chemist he began his academic career as, says dispessionately thet we should try to "move away from the idea that the only 'proper' job is to replicate your faculty adviser end be a professor somewhere. The Ph.D. takes you to other opportunities."

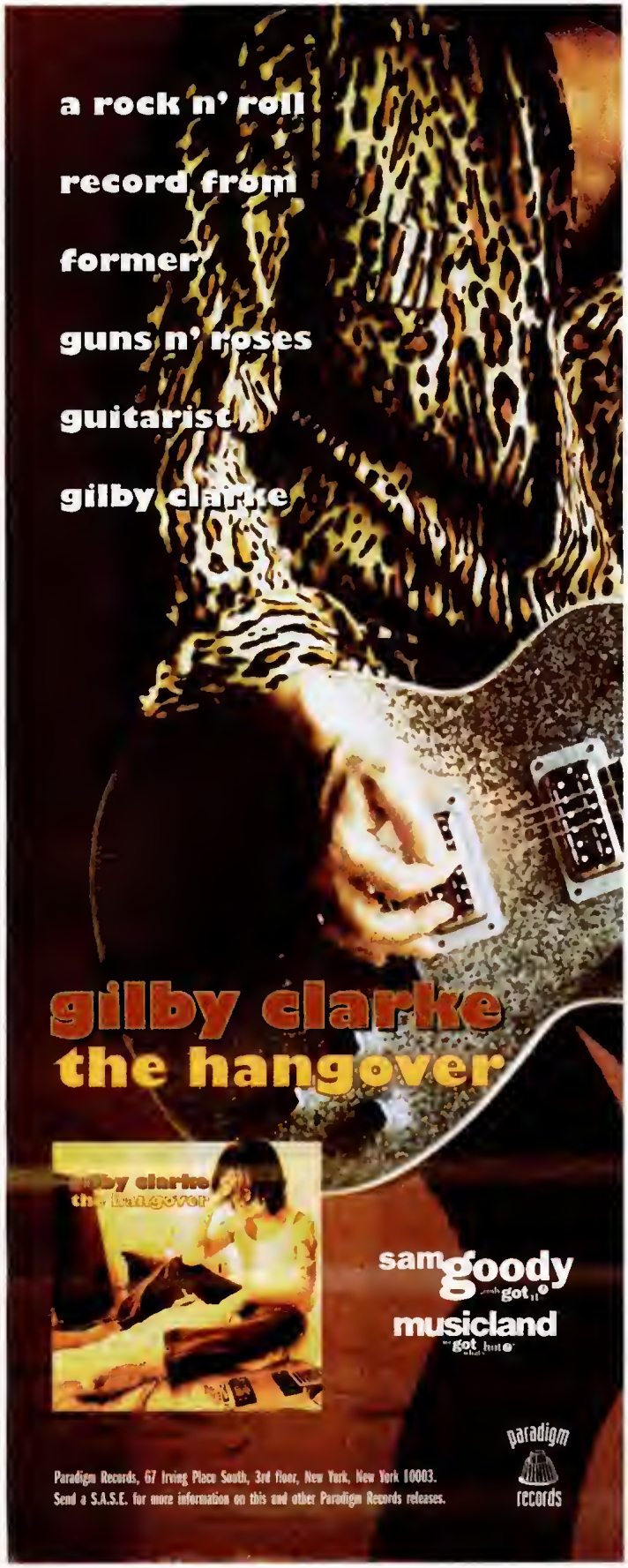
In other words, grad students have little reason to think their professors or administrators are looking out for them (and that's putting it mildly). The professionai compact is hanging by a thread—the consciences of individual advisers. Which leaves Ph.D. candidates only one, increasingly common, choice: unionize. Elite students now plausibly see themseives as pink-coliar workers. At Yale in 1995, a T.A. strike that included an attempt to withhold grades met with a virulent counterattack by university administrators; so much so that the National Labor Reietions Board iooked into whether Yale's strikebreaking tactics violated labor law.

At places like Yale end Berkeiey, where the grad-students' union, a UAW affiliate, has been fighting for university recognition since 1983, the issues are hardly Ivory Tower: health benefits, bloated ciesses, the right not to repeat the mid-1990s, when state budget cuts to education were shouldered disproportionately by grad students.

The labor unrest is symptomatic of the deeper crisis: If tenured jobs aren't there, and the university needs cheap grad labor at least as much as vice versa, how long can the mythos of academia survive? "I've taught multivariable calculus four times," says Lily Khadjavi, the union president at Berkeley and e sixth-year math Ph.D. "i'm not learning new things."

The scary part is, as grad school goes, students at Berkeley have it better than nearly anybody else. Another of my former classmates now teaches at the University of South Carolina, where e T.A. makes $3,500 a semester (against Berkeley's $6–7,000) to teach three sections (versus Berkeley's two) of 20 to 30 students each; if you lecture as well, supervising 90 students personally, you get a whopping $500 raise and make $4,000 per





semester. From this mammoth paycheck, gred studants daduct $750 for tuition aach semester. And forget any health insurance.

I visited Columbia, South Carolina, wondering why, in 1997, enyone would enroll in e graduata schooi at an institution where it's rare for students to laave with tenure-track positions. As a Berkeley first-year Ph.D. student said to me, "My undargraduate adviser told me thet unless you gat in to one of the reelly good schools, it's not worth going." Ganerally, those arguing for reforming graduate education have urged closing down or reducing lower-ranked Ph.D. programs; or at laast sloughing off tha dissertation end other requirements, so studants passing through such programs can get to the bere-bonas taaching posts they're destined for without the eight-or-so-year charade.

But the four graduate students I spoke with chenged my mind. More pragmatic than Berkeley students because thay heve to be, yat no lass committed to iearning, they're proof of how such cutbecks would insult eny democratic ideal of education. Debbie King arrived lest yeer at South Cerolina to be part of the school's smallar Applied History program: an M.A. degree that prepares you for work in archives, corporata librarias, and other nontaaching spots. (Tha two profassors who haad the program ere legend for helping students find jobs; one of them told me she herself had gone 11 years seeking a post in the last crisis, and now uses her personal departmantal funds to shuttla protégés to conferences in packed vanpools.) Yet a kay reason King picked South Carolina over other public history programs was that hara, Applied students got a real history aducation—tha laarning wasn't all preprofessional and administrative.

Tom Downay aarnad an Applied History M.A. at South Carolina, spent a year looking bafore he found a iow-paying job he didn't much like at the Studabakar Musaum in indiana, and eventuaily returned to the university as a doctoral studant. His wifa, an Applied graduate as weii, was working nearby doing public outreach for tha Savannah River Archaeological Research Program. Paopla like Downey and his wife ara tha grunt workers of educated life. Dean Cerny wouid approve of Downey's flexible career embitions. "I want to stay in e history field," Downay says. "Right now I can do museums, preservation, aditing, taaching, whatever." Still, as a formar manager of a chain-owned record store, Downey relishad the opportunity to get a doctorate: "i might gat bittar that I didn't get a bettar job out of it, but spending my time hare, I'm navar going to have an opportunity like that again."

Kim Kellison came to the University of South Carolina from the state's tiny Erskine College in 1989 to study iew, changed har mind aftar three days, and enrolled in the history master's program instead. "I went to grad school because I didn't know what to do," she says frankly. Also, "things were supposad to opan up, when, by the mid-'90s?" Aftar taaching her second year, Kellison knew she'd found her calling. And taach she has, every semester since, plus weekends tour-gulding at an historic museum, tutoring athletes, end performing othar odd jobs. Finally, iast summer, she borrowed money from har parents to complate her dissertation—on the social impact of evangelic Christianity in tha 19th-century upcountry South Carolina.

Nothing turned up on the job markat this yaar for Kellison, who now has her Ph.D. in hand and was back taaching at Erskina this summer. Her goal had bean to find permanant work at a four-year liberal arts college, but these days, she says, "if I could gat a job at a community college, *hell*!" Yet she bristias when I suggest that mayba har Ph.D. raquiremants should have been lass vigorous, given the lack of prospects. Later, she walks me home to the campus's old-feshion quad, ending up at the stataly archive of South Caroliniana whare sha rasaarchad har dissartation, and I raalize that what I'm proposing should be cut from her education may well have been its highlight. That, and the chance to iive among other grad students. "People ware so bizarre, so different," she recalls. "It was really refreshing."

A degree from South Carolina doesn't promisa much. But does that maan South Carolina doesn't daserva to hava a program? Kavin Gannon came to tha University of South Carolina aftar tha Univarsity of Virginia, whare ha was first on the wait list, followad the course of reducing its ovarall admits. Downay, too, came to South Carolina after losing out in a downsizing shuffla. Both men support the idee of admitting fewer students to gradueta programs, but acknowledge that if South Carolina hadn't said yes thay'd hava kapt looking. Downey's fether, for that matter, is paying his own way to get a geology Ph.D., simply out of a love of laarning. What would it say about our own love of laarning to shut thase doors?

To get to Morris, Minnesota, you drive 185 miles west from the Minneapolis airport, past Freeport—"Dairy Center of the World"—past the Sinclair Lewis Interpretive Center (*Main Street* was set out here), and past Starbuck—"The Friendly City"—where you can spot e sculpture of a prancing deer set on a crab-cocktail-shaped stone. In Morris, there's one barely palatable restaurant, if you like meat; one store that sells magazines, books, and records, end rents videos; and—miracles!—one boho café.

"You couldn't get a latte in town before February. Ponder the extraordinary nature of this." Susan Bernardin teaches at the University of Minnesota at Morris, after attending grad school at UC Santa Cruz and also living in Santa Barbara. It's been e long, strenge trip for this ex-Deadhead, into arctic winters and cultural isolation, but there were only two job openings in the country in '95-96 for what Bernadin did, and she got one of them. A true academic—"I'm very interested in the contact zones between cultures, and how narrative forms can serve as that," she says—she feels intellectually at home here, teaching courses in Native American, women's, and African-American literature. For her, right now, this is e great job.

I've come out to see my college buddy to experience the isolation grad students will endure for employment and hear about her marital woes. Two-career couples are the norm these days, and unless both partners are in the same department, it's tough to arrange joint positions. Bernadin's husband is a physicist specializing in quantum cosmology, a declining subfield where postings are scarce. He's got a postdoc in Canada, where he's taken a half-time appointment so he can commute every few weeks to Morris, umpteen hours of flying and driving. The odds of getting work together are infinitesimal—

"MY UNDERGRADUATE ADVISER TOLD ME THAT UNLESS YOU GET INTO ONE OF THE REALLY GOOD SCHOOLS, IT'S NOT WORTH GOING."

"there are not a lot of job opportunities for theoretical physicists in western Minnesota," Bernadin says dryly. She has an actual position, so what now? "We can't really come to a conclusion—he likes what he does too much. There's nothing I can give him here to replace it—except me."

And maybe that coffeehouse. People come to grad school hoping to lead a relatively unstructured life of the mind—and a few get there. The majority settle nearby to that ideal, teaching without much opportunity to write, working in places where ideas are valued less than cheeriness and competence, or scuffling in some new direction. America's decision to send everyone to college has led, in the past two generations, to a vast swelling in the number of would-be intellectuals (ironic, given that we're constantly told no one thinks anymore). Unfortunately, there isn't room for us all.

This needn't read as a tragedy. For Susan Bernardin to bring her ideas to Morris is the right sort of cultural imperialism; the University of South Carolina should remain a place where someone like Kim Kellison can discover her calling; and maybe, if graduate students are pushed hard enough, they'll stop relying on the graduate-school apprentice system to determine their fates. I'm more cynical about that last one, but let me make one trembling suggestion. If universities truly want to uncloister themselves, and discharge Ph.D.s who can, as Dean Cerny demands, use their degrees anywhere, they'll need to learn to see higher education as less of a professional impulse and more of a bohemian impulse. After all, the new breed of ecedemic celebrities—Henry Louis Gates, Merjorie Garber, Andrew Ross—are all bohemians of a sort, twitting their more stolid colleagues as they jump from department to department, from academic work to popular writing.

Inspired by such figures, by learning, and by a refusal to face economic reality, new crops of grad students keep arriving, many fer too free-thinking for the programs and prospects they'll encounter. No, it isn't sensible—that's the joy of it. "I worked full time processing insurance claims," South Carolina's Kevin Gannon says. "I'd kill myself if I had to do that full time." ●

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This page: Suit with aqua pinstripes by Paul Smith; silk shirt and tie by Ozwald Boateng; leather belt by Trussardi; leather bump-toe shoes by Patrick Cox. Opposite: Wool coat by Helmut Lang; cotton shirt by Ozwald Boateng; sunglasses by Cutler & Gross; attaché by Zéro Halliburton.

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risky business

You never really made it past the Circle of '91 [illegible] the breakup of Sigue Sigue Sputnik and the first time you said "ciao" and the [illegible] coke-schnoofing writers who use the second-person present tense, like, a lot. And now it's 1997, and you can't say the terrain is entirely [illegible].

Photographs by Guzman



This page: Cotton shirt, wool pinstripe pants (from a suit), and leather shoes, all by Giorgio Armani. Opposite: Her: Tulle dress and silk slipdress (underneath) by Prade. Him: Suit by Antonio Miro; tie by Paul Smith.





This page: Poplin shirt by Turnbull & Asser; flannel vest (from e three-piece suit) by Beldesserini Hugo Boss. Opposite: Two-tone mohair suit and silk shirt by Ozweld Boeteng; belt by Trussardi. Where to Buy, pege 150.

Photographs by Guzman.
Fashion Editor: Jill Swid.
Stylist: Thierry Colson/Brigitte Hebant.
Hair: Perrine Rougemont/Brigitte Hebant.
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fun-coma

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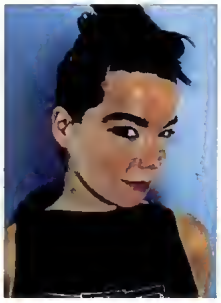
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Björk
Homogenic (Elektra)

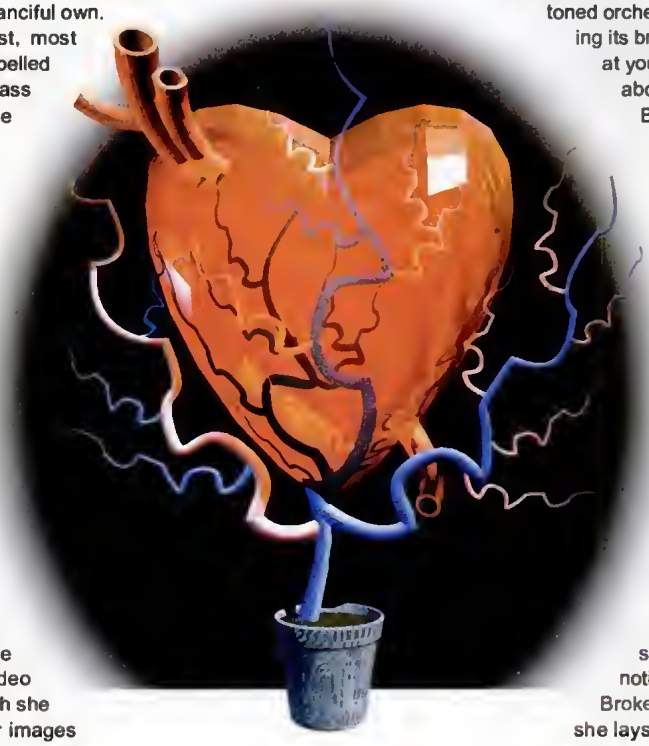


The singer throws up lyrics about pursuit and desertion. A snare drum lightly skips across a series of bass pinpoints, an organic foundation unthinkable before techno. The song's called "Hunter," and it mey actually involve archery. Cellos advance and violins carve out a clearing. High-pitched synthesizer chords flutter through the forest, applying a final hair-spray touch. This could only be Björk.

Recorded on the Spanish Riviera, the 31-year-old Reykjavik native's new album delves deeply into hip-hop, flies in orchestras, and proves that the electronic generation will yield much more than a string of dance epiphanies. Esoteric yet blunt, *Homogenic* is an eerily sustained work that ambitiously shares the methods and auras of contemporary design, film, end theater; end it represents progress on nobody's terms except Björk's admittedly fanciful own. She's now the Western world's hungriest, most commercially successful art-pop boss, compelled equally by the minimalist epics of Phillip Glass and the communication shorthand of the Nike swoosh.

Critics who complained that she *didn't rock* after the Sugarcubes dissolved and Björk entered clubland on 1993's *Debut*, will not hoist lighters into the air. Some will still dismiss her singing's raw naturalism and soprano elasticity as "affect." Fans of the "elfin chanteuse" will continue to consider her height very important. And those who take their genre-girls straight—whatever the generational provenance, and with guitars, please—may find that Björk doesn't measure up to Sheryl Crow or Courtney Love.

Oh, no. The Björk of *Homogenic* is the Björk of *Debut* and 1995's *Post*, but now she's discovered a finer strategy for her emotional obsessions and formal concerns. The age-old duel between technology and nature has fascinated her since 1993's "Human Behaviour"—the song's video still governs perceptions of her even though she hes leaped beyond it into the 4,000 other images that swirled through *Post* and its 1996 remix companion, *Telegraph*. Yet Björk, unlike so many before her, doesn't demonize the artificial and assign innocence to the natural. Instead, she keeps refining her more comfortably developed view, a vision that's neither tormented by machines nor too squished-up by hippie dogma. She senses cutting-edge sophistication in trees and hears a lovably daft awkwardness in drum machines. Björk constantly mixes it up, less out of perversity or cleverness than an ebiding faith in how things strike *her*. In the process, she's managed to make anxious, everyday life glitter.



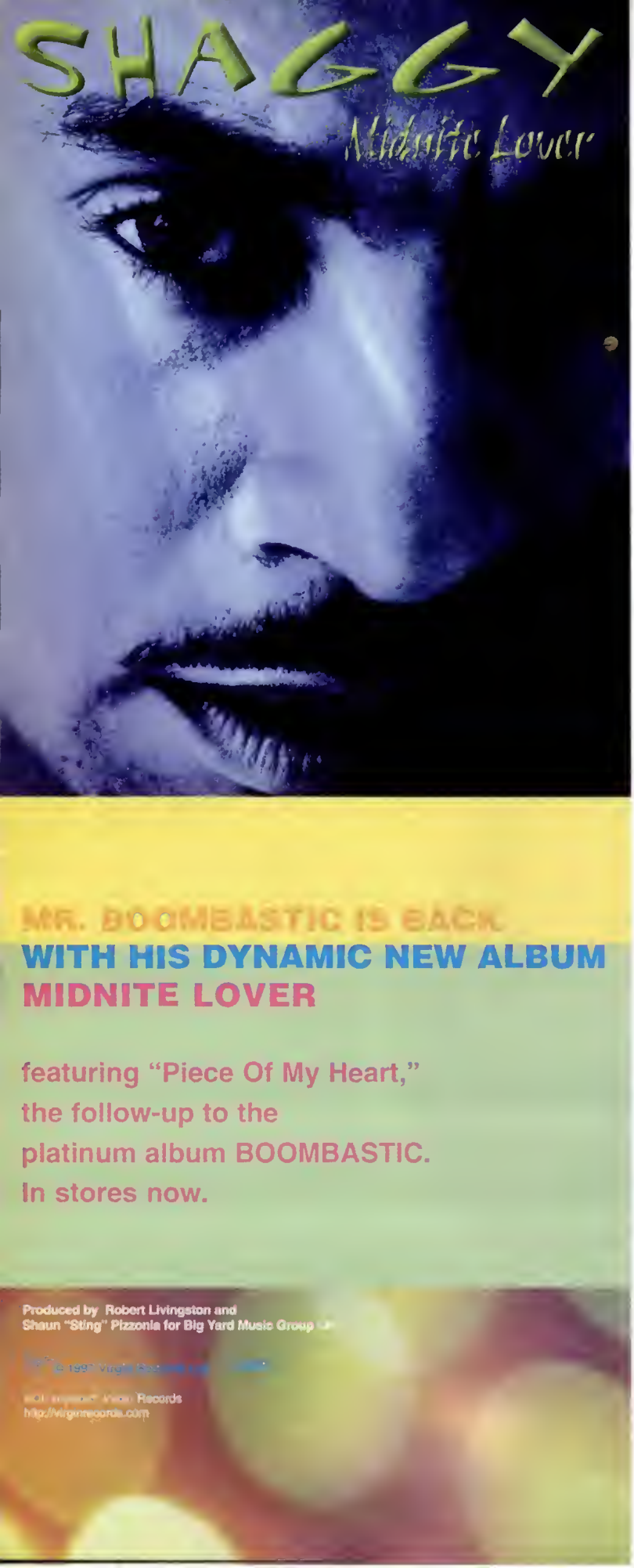
GIACOMO MARCHESI

The Icelandic String Octet—scored by Björk with Brazilian disco maestro Eumir Deodato, and recorded with flowing edges—acts as *Homogenic*'s operatic chorus, playing, more or less, the role of Nature. On "Joga," Björk thanks someone for pushing her into e "state of emergency" (a condition she relishes), while the Octet saws away calmly. Then on the chorus, the strings soar into quickly voiced affirmations as Björk explores the fuller, more womanly tone she unveiled on *Post*. But underneath, with a quietly firm destructiveness, a hip-hop track bristles, distorts, and whistles. There's not much integration—a certain disjointedness is the point. The song depicts one woman's emotional agenda in the presence of luxurious modern architecture: exaggerated corners, nonexistent ceilings, and beautiful doors. It's a track that wants to sound as active as the chaos it embraces.

Other songs reverse the billing, as rhythm tracks give Technology, not Nature, the instrumental arias. On "All Neon Like," e descending five-note synth figure repeats against a subtly moving, starry-toned orchestral backdrop—gaining, losing, and regaining its bright prominence in the mix. "Don't get angry at yourself," Björk sings, "I'll heal you." But that's about it, poetry fans: Like an electronic artist, Björk is now suspicious of lyrics as the so*le* carriers of meaning (there are none of her bent sitcoms—*Post*'s "Hyper-ballad," for instance—on *Homogenic*). Hearing "All Neon Like" is like being wordlessly ushered into a hypnotically proportioned room. On "Dare," a tricky denunciation of a former lover, and "Immature," a more sarcastic variation, Björk turns up the motion, relying on theatrical grooves that sound like, respectively, watermelons dropped onto a sidewalk from the roof of a ten-story building and a clock symphony performed on an ocean liner. Only with the funky "Joy" and the industrial-strength "Pluto" does she concentrate on genre. But boy, does she have a gift for ignoring it.

Three times on *Homogenic*, Björk dips a toe into the warm lake of tradition, but she always proceeds according to her own notions of disjointed space and passion. On "So Broken," accompanied by only a flamenco guitar, she lays out the pieces of her heart. But the world-historically lush "Shape Shifter," e ballad shot in Cinerama whose rousing transitions would do any Indian soundtrack proud, and "All Is Full," whose rockish minor-key verses tralpse off into Björk gospel, ere *Homogenic*'s new/old masterpieces. They *make* the album, not because they demonstrate a mastery of fundamentals, which they do, but because they underscore how Björk, apart from other female artists right now, has stared down the hip-hopped, electronicized, written-out present. Amid all the premillennial tension, she had this great idea: Why not something new?

James Hunter



SPIN RATING SYSTEM

10 A CLASSIC
9 NEAR PERFECT
8 VERY GOOD
7 WORTHY
6 REASONABLY GOOD
5 MARGINAL
4 POOR
3 OUO
2 WORTHLESS
1 VILE

8 Missy "Misdemeanor" Elliott

Supa Dupa Fly (EastWest/EEG)

The prospect of a second album by R. Kelly's supposed child bride, Aaliyah, was so enticing, I left her *One in a Million* moldering unplayed for damn near a year. Then radio got hold of "4 Page Letter." The slinkily beautiful song was built on a gradually uncoiling melody, a tropical backdrop of chirping birds and creaking frogs, weird time signatures, and heavy-on-the-hi-hat programming that suggested it had been culled from some obscure drum'n'bass compilation. *One in a Million*—the album that sat untended while I gave serious consideration to crap like Morcheeba and Sneaker Pimps—was liberally sprinkled with more densely atmospheric songs, and almost all of them were written by Missy "Misdemeanor" Elliott and produced by Tim "Timbaland" Mosley.



A one-time member of Sista (Jodeci's dud, distaff counterpart), Elliott has spent the past few years becoming hip-hop-soul's Steve Buscemi, stealing scenes and warbling cameos on other folks' hits. But her debut solo single, "The Rain (Supa Dupa Fly)," with its head-turning Hype Williams video, instantly familiar Ann Peebles sample, and array of readymade catchphrases ("Beep-beep / Oooh got the keys to the jeep / Vrrrroomm"), remade summer of '97 in Elliott's image. At the risk of wandering into the realms of overstatement, *Supa Dupa Fly* is distinctive, cohesive, and innovetive enough to wind up as the most influential pop record since Dr. Dre's *The Chronic*.

Elliott's proficiency with e hook is unerring; everything here has "hit" stamped all over it—the insidious got-me-hot pop trifle, "Sock It 2 Me"; the mile-high smoocher, "Friendly Skies"; the self-aggrandizing "Izzy Izzy Ahh"; and the totally lovely display of sisterly solidarity, "Best Friends." Timbaland's production scenarios—he constructs "Beep Me 911" from a maelstrom of skittering drum patterns, human beatbox effects, and ringing telephones—breathe new life into a stagnant genre, even recalling Sly & Robbie's '80s collaborations with Grace Jones. Although choked with celebrity guest shots from songwriting clients (Aaliyah, Ginuwine, 702) and like-minded contemporaries (Lil' Kim, Da Brat, Busta Rhymes), this album is Elliott and Timbaland's show. There is no shortage of voluble artist-producer pairings these days, but on the strength of *Supa Dupa Fly*—which even comes with its cursing pre-excised—these two are the team to beat. *Jonathan Bernstein*

6 Oasis

Be Here Now (Epic)

"Look into the wall of my mind's eye," sings our cosmic Liam. "The questions are the answers you might need," counsels the young Gallagher. And finally, over a looming tapestry of psychedelic guitars, he calls out to his flock: "All my people / Right here, right now / D'you know what I mean?"

Okay, people, let's see some hends. Who knows what Liam means? This momentous, meaning-free call to arms is, in a way, the perfect introduction to *Be Here Now*, Oasis's latest collection of mid-tempo sonic dramas. From their very first single, these kings of Britpop have been all about *not* being you. They are rock'n'roll stars. They're going to live forever. Where were you when *they* were getting high? Now in *Austin*

Powers mode, they're calling all around tha world, talling us to be here now, baby. Since this global community is purely imaginary, the question—"D'you know what I mean?"—hangs in the vaulted ceiling of majestic chord changes and shimmering distortion like a lone worshiper's burp in a cathedrel.

Which is all to say that what wa have hare is another quality Oasis record. Truly, thara is an art, or at laast an impressive lack of self-regard, to the construction of such extravagant melodic spaces for such fatuous lyrics. Lika a skilled Cadillac manufacturer, songwriting brother Noel cites the superior material that goes into his songs (stainless-steel Beatle) and cranks out sleek, luxury product. Aside from a few Morse-code guitar bleeps and seagull distortion, the only electronica hangover from Noel's romp with tha Chemical Brothers is tha album's dance-club editing. "All Around the World," with orchestral strings, French horns, and "Penny Lane" trumpets, runs almost ten minutes.



No one ever accused Oasis of having mad rhyma skills, but thay're dafinitely pushing new boundaries of *de minimis* here: "All around the world / You've got to spread tha word / Tell them what you heard / Wa're gonna make a better day"? Oasis have gotten away with this until now because Liam's projected arrogance scorned any yearning for meaning and Noel's compulsive Baatles refarencing let us know that it's all just songs. The latter tic, however, is beginning to sound more and more like autism, tha language of someone who can't speak a word about life without lapsing into McCartneyisms like, "And all the roads we have to walk are winding," or Lannonisms like, "Start a ravolution from my bed."

"There are many things that I would like to say to you / But I don't know how," Liam sings, in what some might assume is Oasis's most candid lyric. But I doubt even that. Unarticulated emotion isn't what you hear in that Mancunian drawl, it's more the slouching disdain of an assembly-line worker. Note to all young Americans currently growing out their eyebrows: Imagine an Amarican band whose unofficial logo is their nation's flag, whose main lore is intoxicants and football affiliations, whose biggast single is greeted in homeland bars by young and old alike with a solamnly raised brew. Folks, meet the British Lynyrd Skynyrd. *Chris Norris*

7 Organized Konfusion

The Equinox (Priority)

With their machine-gun-quick rhymas and quirky sansa of humor, Organized Konfusion could be the Coen Brothars of hip-hop. While other rappers (Notorious B.I.G., Wu-Tang Clan, Bone Thugs-N-Harmony) deliver explosion-filled, blockbuster sequels, Organized MCs Prince Poetry and Pharaoh Monch drop art-house joints, full of intricate, personal stories told from shifty perspectives. Gun talk is easy, but try writing a rhyma from the bullet's point of view, as Organized did on 1995's "Stray Bullet" (from *Stress: The Extinction Agenda*), a full two years bafora Nas daliverad a simplified version on his "I Gave You Power."

Of course, most of the public naver heard "Stray Bullet," and the early moments of Organized's latest album, *The Equinox*, find tha duo bitterly walking the streets of New York, blathering about the end of hip-hop like bums with placards spouting gibbarish about the apocalypsa. How many diffarent ways can an MC, as on "9X Out of 10," complain that most rappers are phony and unimaginative (imagina that). Luckily, the production (by the likes of Diamond, Showbiz, and Buckwild) is rhythmically and malodically axpressive, and by









the middle of the album, Poetry and Monch finally stop bitching about the *bullshit rap industry*. "Invetro," rhymed from the point of view of a crackhead's baby, is stunning, full of warped sarcasm and concerned morality. We smell the smoke, we hear the drone of the talk shows on the tube, and we hear of the crimes the fetus (already a convict in the womb) will commit efter it's born.

On the masterful "Hate," you're completely sucked in by Poetry's unpredictable role-playing. With an impact more powerful than a bullet, he raps believably and with compassion from the perspective of a neo-Nazi bigot—"I'm on my toes around these monkeys and Spics / I thank God that I'm white and pure / And don't mix." The rhyme's so shocking because there's no explanation or reassuring footnote. In this overtaxed, too-often didactic art form, Organized Konfusion shine because they esk listeners to make up their own minds.

F. Castle

2 311

Transistor (Capricorn)

"Three words: Average White Band." That's the review I wanted to write—pithy and hostile, two qualities that could only help Nebraska's rock-by-numbers outfit, 311.

Back in the mid-'90s, we all grooved to their netional breakout, "Down." A li'l Bad Brainsy even as it cashed out at the RageATM, its propulsive verses and dippy melodic chorus flowed into one big, babbling hook. As e reaction to the grunge blueprint—musing/tantrum/bridge—"Down" was cannily stoopid, in en idiot savant kind of way. But, as you remember from your days in the Dead parking lot, every idiot savant is a reggae fan waiting to happen.

Of course, chunky guitars blended with smoove, blue-eyed reggae is the rock axiom du jour ("If it's not ska-tish, it's crap"), and *Transistor* rides the Zeitgeist train from here to eternity. At least it feels that way: During the hour-plus of seamlessly similar stoner grooves, you start to hope—and eventually pray—for the slightest shock to the system: something, enything, e sharp stick in the irie. But all you get is the bong in the reggae song.

The secret to 311's bankability js the strange misunderstanding that this is some kind of edgy, Buzz Bin-esque music; alas, not even the ghost of electricity howls in *Transistor*'s bones. As the title track rocks modernly up the charts, everyone seems determined to ignore the obvious: *311 is a jem band*. They're Phish with a fuzzbox and a faux-Island liit. Amid the album's ait-hippie convergence, only a couple of songs stand out: "The Continuous Life" (named after a book of Mark Strand poems; a previous hit rhymed e.e. cummings with "kill dem stunning") returns to the dynamic verve of "Down." And in "Stealing Happy Hours," a floaty, jerry-built guitar sweetly lulls the rhythm section until the album finally ends, not with a bang but a coma.

311 like to "let it flow" and "conduct



you to the motherstar"; "Prisoner" sets the scene with "crystal balls and sidewalk malls, psychic people outdoors reading palms." They heve such e finely honed pointlessness that it's hard to tell if they're celebrating or ironizing. "Our name," 311 would have you know (according to a fan's Web site, *311—True-Misdirected Hostilities*), "simply means five friends from Omaha making music. Music thet stands for peace and unity." That's beautiful, man.

Jane Dark

5 Luke Vibert

Big Soup (Mo' Wax/ffrr)

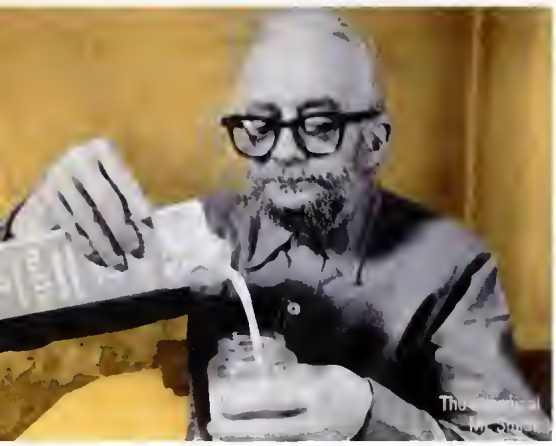
8 Thievery Corporation

Sounds from the Thievery Hi-Fi (Eighteenth Street Lounge Music)

Better known as Plug (his jungle moniker) or Wagon Christ (his prior trip-hop alias), 24-year-old Cornwall, England, native Luke Vibert is one of those "bedroom producers" who was inspired by Aphex Twin's DIY stardom, grafting *Star Trek* semples to synthetic beats in between homework assignments. *Big Soup*, his first proper U.S. release, follows a recipe that is by now as familiar to him

Bohemian Rhapsody

The *Anthology of American Folk Music* is one man's vision of his record collection as a quixotic State of the Union address. **Robert Christgau** argues that it is also a cultural treasure.



Harry Smith was a strange, bearded little man from Portland, Oregon, who lived in places like Berkeley and the Hotel Chelsea and spent his days painting, creating experimental films, scrounging money, making whoopee, and collecting stuff—quilts, paper airplanes, Ukrainian Eester eggs, phonograph records, anything. Especially phonograph records.

At a time when most discophiles were classical or jazz buffs, Smith specialized in what might be called subcultural 78s—popularly oriented commercial recordings aimed at newly targeted "ethnic" markets, perticularly "race" (for blacks) and "hillbilly" (for whites). Unlike Alan Lomax, with his voluminous field and Library of Congress recordings, Smith never met the artists he so admired—they grabbed him not as fellow human beings but as entertainers reaching for a paying audience. But they grabbed him so hard that by 1952 he hed sifted through thousands of 78s to confidently select, astutely sequence, end cunningly document 84 sides, which were released in three two-LP sets as Folkways' *Anthology of American Folk Music*. Now Smithsonian Folkways has digitally remastered them into an exhaustively annotated six-CD set that has no competition as reissue of the year.

Formally, the *Anthology* is simply one more compilation, a fact of commercial life as labels recycle catalogue for CD purchase. But where even the best of these—*Amp*, which realizes MTV producer Todd Mueller's vision of the pop-techno nexus, or the *Dazed and Confused* soundtrack, which does the same for Richard Linklater's fond memories of stoner AOR—are hemmed in by profit motive, the *Anthology* is a collagist's act of love. Given his pick of an unimaginable wealth of song, Smith configured that wealth according to his own vision of America. And between strength of material and force of vision, he did nothing less than create a canon. At a time when folk music encompassed Leadbelly, Woody Guthrie, tame Piedmont bluesmen, guitar-strumming fellow travelers, and the Lomax corpus, Harry Smith convinced the world that it was something far weirder and more exciting. Rock's closest analogy is 1972's *Nuggets*, in which critic/musician Lenny Kaye resuscitated galvanic singles by forgotten "psychedelic" garage bands and paved the way for punk.

Smith's canon stretched back to the Middle Ages, forward to the *Titanic*, and beyond, but its pivot foot was in Reconstruction, when American blacks were finally free to create a miscegenated but autonomous culture that their white compatriots could miscegenate right back. In 1952, only 20 or 25 years had passed since these tunes were originally recorded—as much time as separates us from *Nuggets*. In one form or another, some were still widely known. There were "John Henry," "Frankie and Johnny," "Stagger Lee," and lots of documented Child balleds; Guthrie had rewritten "Washington Blues" as "Lindbergh"; "I Woke Up One Morning in May" closely resembled "On Top of Old Smokey"; etc. Yet for many young people whose lives were changed by the *Anthology* when it was first released, its eccentric virtuosity and arcanely historical content constituted a thrilling and startling revelation. And this revelation would change American music, fuel the "folk revival," from the Kingston Trio to Bob Dylan, and directly influence such '60s rockers as Neil Young and Jerry Garcia. It would inspire young explorers to scavenge the South for 78s and locate such living musicians as *Anthology* mainstays Mississippi John Hurt, Furry Lewis, Dock Boggs, and Bascom Lamar Lunsford. The bluegrass style that Bill Monroe invented in the mid-'30s spread north because Smith pointed the way.

So is the *Anthology* that good? Of course not. Nothing that changes one person's life is going to mean as much to the next guy. Even the folkie faithful didn't like it all—exception was taken, for instance, to the dance and religious tunes on *Volume II*, "Social Music." Anyway, much of what made the *Anthology* remarkable—Smith's commitment to overlaying the surreal on the commonplace—has been absorbed into rock, undercutting shock appeal for a new audience that knows the gestalt, even if it has never heard a minute of this music.

Nevertheless, we're talking treasure trove here. I've long adored a few of these artists, notably John Hurt and the Memphis Jug Band. But I'd never heard two-thirds of the tracks or a third of the songs, and I can't get enough of them. The set—which properly devotes an entire CD to each of Smith's LPs, which were so subtly structured that cramming three onto two discs would compromise the experience—makes nice archaic background music if that's your fancy. But at least two dozen tunes (my estimete keeps rising) pack the endlessly renewable grace, delight, surprise, and irreducibility of classics.

As I was writing this paragraph, for instance, Furry Lewis's "Kassie [Casey] Jones" came around again, its riff so fetching and lyric so unpredictable that Smith couldn't resist including both sides; and right after that, up popped the Bently Boys' "Down on Penny's Farm." Just a little banjo figure and some Bently or other (nobody's even sure they were from North Carolina) talking mortgage and agronomy in e sidelong singsong that manages to be both doleful end sprightly. Gets me every time—in a way the next track, Delta-deddy Cherley Patton's "Mississippi Boll Weevil Blues," does not. I could have chosen many other examples. I mean, annotators Greil Marcus and Robert Cantwell have published major *book*s that center on the *Anthology*. But I must add a few impolite observations.

Smith is rightly renowned for ignoring racial distinctions—the musical and thematic connections he draws transcend black and white (forget brown—Latinos, unlike Cejuns, are absent). In pre–Elvis and *Brown v. Board of Education* 1952, stressing the commonality of Southern music was holy work, and Smith's claim that folklorists thought John Hurt was white reminds us how deep the impulse to stereotype runs (apparently, Hurt sounded too *gentle* to be the same color as Leadbelly). But that doesn't make all music equal. And for most listeners, the race records will average out a notch better than the hillbilly. They're less repressed, musically and sexually. I also question Smith's pro-weird bias. One reason alt types will take to the *Anthology* is that it's so bohemian—when in doubt, Smith went for strange. He obviously had an amazing ear—most of the CD-era's many multiartist folk concatenations are encyclopedia-dull by comparison. Prey to no myths of class or cash-nexus inauthenticity, Smith's tradition-carriers include an Appalachian lawyer, a Hollywood cowboy, and an obscure Minnesota dance band. But I suspect that some contented husband-and-wife team, say, could have concocted a more domestic musical image of the "folk."

So we needn't believe the *Anthology of American Folk Music* represents the "real" folk, much less the "real" America. It's one compelling and engrossing version of those chimeras—profoundly influential rather than the Rosetta stone. It would appear, after all, that the strains of '60s rock forged by Jimi Hendrix, Lou Reed, Smokey Robinson, Randy Newman, and the *Nuggets* collective have their proximate sources in traditions peripheral to these, at best.

But thet isn't to suggest for a moment that all those guys wouldn't love the shit out of this set. ●

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as mom's cream of cauliflower: In song after song, Vibert builds a fluid groove out of slo-mo breakbeats and rubbery bass lines, then farts in your general direction with cat shrieks, ghost howls, and spooky laughter. It's like reuniting Elvin Jones, McCoy Tyner, and Jimmy Garrison for a John Coltrane tribute, then having John Zorn blow a duck call into a glass of water. Though Vibert's grooves are always in the pocket, that pocket contains nothing but the usual assortment of decoder rings and frayed bits of *Mars Attacks!* trading cards. Mo' Wax head James Lavelle, a famous collector of *Star Wars* memorabilia, has not had a salutory effect on his young charge's geek-boy tendencies. Beware the dork side, Luke.

While Vibert gets off on baring the seams of trip-hop, Rob Garza and Eric Hilton would consider such behavior gauche. In early 1996, a series of 12-inch singles with titles like "2001 Spliff Odyssey" and "Shaolin Satellite" began popping up under the name Thievery Corporation in DJ stores' "downtempo" bins. Packaging their vinyl in elaborate sleeves, the Washington, D.C., duo behind the *nom de plunder* was equelly fastidious about their grooves, layering dub, bossa nova, and chop-socky swipes in a remarkably stately manner. On "Shaolin Satellite," they stripped a classic, mike-checking rap of its bad-boy bravado by nesting it in a



tranquil groove—'70s soul organ, New Orleans second-line rhythm, Ofra Haza–esque moan, and the switch of a Bic lighter failing to fire.

Though they slyly refuse to clear their samples and brag that the "Thievery Corporation wishes to give thanks and respect to no one," the group's debut album is not only the deepest groove record since Massive Attack's *Blue Lines* but lushly unironic at its core. On "Universal Highness,"



Thievery borrow the same Nigerian Yoruba chant that Sandoz (Cabaret Voltaire's Richard H. Kirk) used on his 1993 track "Limbo." But where Sandoz spent eight minutes frantically trying to frame and reframe the sample, Garza and Hilton take the chant's soothing timbres as their cue, setting the call-and-response vocal on a firm mattress of mellow congas and synth washes, then tucking it in with understated finger snaps and horn pops. *Sounds from the Thievery Hi-Fi* is dedicated to the memory of Brazilian legend Antonio Carlos Jobim, which makes perfect sense for a record that swings so hard and sways so gentle. (Eighteenth Street Lounge Music, 1212 18th Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20036) *Jeff Salamon*

6 Various Artists
Give 'Em the Boot (Hellcat/Epitaph)

Twenty years on, punk is museum stuff—Telegraph Avenue its Colonial Williamsburg, and Rancid's Tim Armstrong its leading, period-costumed reenactor. Embalmed in some idealized 1977, his revivalism has always tasted a bit of formaldehyde, and this sampler of bands from Armstrong's new Epitaph subsidiary, running the gamut from ska to punk all the way to ska-punk, stiffens with the same purist rigor. Mucking around with the Founding Fathers equals violation of some essential, keep-it-real contract. But the most interesting and popular (mis)uses of these styles today—No Doubt's new-wave trash, Sublime's port-town gumbo—come from just such mucking around.

With 20 tracks and enough marginal differentiation, there's something here for every moldy fig. Personal punk favorites: Dropkick Murphy's, whose grinning, Pogues-brand tribute comes complete with irresistible "hey hey hey," though without Shane MacGowan's caustic self-implication;

Union 13's searing Spanish version of Rancid's "Roots Radicals"; Rancid's own "The Brothels"; and F-Minus's "No Time," which clocks in at a very-1982 41 seconds. To cover all the bases, there's skate propaganda from U.S. Bombs, surf propaganda from the Upbeat, vintage oi from the Business, and Pressure Point's love bellow to a girl with "Boots and braces / She looks so sweet."

Since ska is by nature less programmatic and more fluid than '77-style punk, there's more room for play. Pick hits include Voodoo Glow Skulls' extremely groovy instrumental, "Los Hombres No Lloran";



the Gadjits' (ska's Hanson) sad, bouncy "Beautiful Girl," about a pretty nerd done in by her domineering boyfriend's "98 pounds of dye"; the Pietasters' Motown rip "New Breed," complete with Temptations allusion; and Skinnerbox's sly, sidelong "Does He Love You." There's also a live Skatalites track for completists, and a toast (the closest anyone dares come to more recent black music) from New York's Stubborn Allstars.

Nothing here is particularly "original," which is, of course, the point. But Dropkick Murphy's and the Gadjits, to name two, could benefit from the mass-audience pollution that *Give 'Em the Boot*'s purity doesn't allow. Maybe on their own, they'll leave the museum's mustiness and frolic in the open air of the '90s. (Hellcat, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026) *Jesse Berrett*

B Belle and Sebastian

If You're Feeling Sinister (The Enclave)

Like the Carpenters with a mean streak, Belle and Sebastian sneak up on you behind a veil of inconsequence; the bounce in their step hides a dire sense of purpose. On the Scottish septet's second album, *If You're Feeling Sinister*, magnificently layered arrangements blend folk-rock (minus the preciousness) with a near-pure pop sense that could seduce even the most jaded audiophile. It's death-by-comfy-chair.

Mixing the precocious-child dreaminess of Beat Happening with the world-weary orchestrated despair of the Tindersticks, Belle and Sebastian's studied melodies are easy to dismiss at first listen. Light and sunny puppy-love fantasies like "Mayfly" are the kind of music you might expect to hear on the soundtrack for a Swinging London– era scooter commercial. But the songs' resemblance to jingles ends with their irresistibility; careful attention reveals a morbid complexity. On the subtly catchy, stubbornly sullen "Get Me Away from Here, I'm Dying," trumpets (trumpets!) and a jangly guitar hook you into a song whose bleak vision recalls novelist Denis Johnson on a bad day.

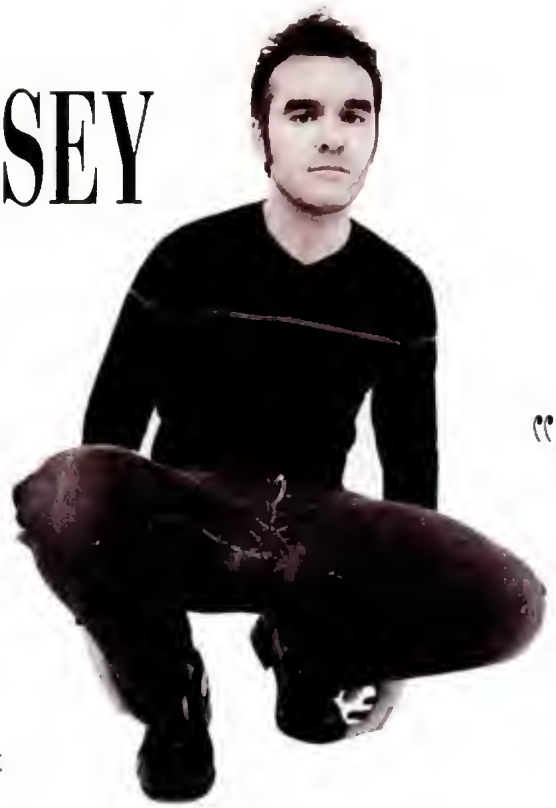
For an album whose creators claim to be the product of "botched capitalism," the songs on *If You're*



Feeling Sinister are insistently unabrasive. Group leader Stuart Murdoch seems to possess a strange ability to sing of depression and tragedy without really suffering for it. There are moments when Belle and Sebastian's detached ditties feel more indulgent than insightful, like what's scrawled in high school poetry anthologies or uttered as dialogue on *Party of Five*. But Murdoch isn't posing as an adolescent cynic; he's just recreating the gloriously sweet veneers of childhood in order to set you up for the ultimate sting—the realization that no, kid, life isn't fair.

Ana Marie Cox

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3 Insane Clown Posse
The Great Milenko (Island)

In its own way, the deal must have made perfect sense. Here was a label, Hollywood, among the most staggeringly unsuccessful on Earth. In its eight years, the Disney subsidiary had passed on Nirvane end the Smashing Pumpkins, while signing Seaweed and Van Gogh's Daughter.



Then one day, a demo tape arrives from Detroit—a tape, it was instantly clear, that fit the label's pitiful mold. And then came a religious-right boycott of Disney over one perceived indecency or another.

Somewhere, somehow, some Bozo was gonna have to pay.

Turns out, though, it's hard to nail a clown to the cross—something about that rubber hammer Disney used. Insane Clown Posse's *The Great Milenko* was recalled when Disney got nervous about ICP's dirty mouths just hours after Hollywood shipped the album. ICP enjoyed a brief martyrdom-slash-bidding-war, then signed with Island. The latest version of the album, with three bonus tracks, is just that much more "insane."

For a couple of songs, *The Great Milenko* accidentally passes as one of the funniest comedy albums around, the kind of perody *Simpsons* fans would appreciete, complete with the low-budget production endemic to such gags. As the record industry keeps searching for white rappers to speak to a nation of Ceucasians, it's e ripe moment for a spoof. And right up to the second "bit," MCs Shaggy 2 Dope and Violent J keep the hoots pumping. Then the seltzer bottle runs dry, and *Milenko* blows up in your hands like rip-off Canadian firecrackers. Doing what they can to help are Alice Cooper, Steve Jones, and Slash (did they make him wear a clown nose?). On songs like "What Is a Juggalo?" and "Hellalujah," trashcan "King of Rock" guitars are hitched to satanic-calliope trills, though maybe thet's trailer-hitched. Home base for these mountebanks are the white pockets of exurban Motown, places where people don't even bother to paint clown makeup on their lawn jockeys.

About the lyrics Disney found offensive: True, *Milenko* makes a mockery of every religious and cultural precept Adem Yauch has celebrated since turning Buddhist. Still, few ere likely to be swayed by ICP's evil powers. The duo might have won more converts if they'd kept the album off the shelves and lived like martyrs to the cause. Now they gotta hide behind the curtains, always alert, because thet kid rolling up on the Big Wheel just might be 311 pulling a drive-by. *RJ Smith*

8 Scott Walker
Tilt (Drag City)

The pinup baritone who fronted the Walker Brothers is remembered by American mainstream audiences as the voice of easy-listening '60s staples "The Sun Ain't Gonna Shine (Anymore)" and "Make It Easy on Yourself," but to Europeans and other extremist groups, Scott Walker is a poet.

After the Brothers split acrimoniously in 1967, Walker (né Noel Scott Engel) embarked on a series of solo albums (*Scott*, *Scott 2*, *Scott 3*) thet explored Continental cabaret's inherent dread, using Belgian composer Jacques Brel as a role model. By the time he



reached *Scott 4*, e lushly arranged commercial flop, Walker needed no role models. The ten compositions on that chilling, doggedly uneasy-listening record proved Walker a writer on a par with Brel, and paved the way for junior brooders Leonerd Cohen and Nick Cave.

But nothing, even in Walker's eccentric catalog, could have prepared us for the strange sensation of this album. An unprecedented mix of industrial noise, shambling tone poetry, and lilting orchestration, *Tilt* (as in "Tilting at windmills," I suppose) is a picaresque that turns on suggestive character studies of condemned crusaders and exiles. Walker, an Ohio native who left the U.S. for England decades ago, is perfectly cast in both roles. His early interest in filmic crusader Ingmar Bergman is answered here with a tribute to slain Italian filmmaker and artistic exile Pier Paolo Pasolini ("Farmer in the City"). The title track, by far the most approachable, is a country tune that sends Don Quixote to Dodge City. "The Cockfighter" sounds like an execution scene out of a Lorca poem.

Tilt leavens Walker's signature melancholy with a new kind of dread, generated by sparse, unconventional percussion, rattling white-noise dissolves, and some truly gnarly guitar. Walker's unearthly voice has never sounded so resourceful. It's as if he's fighting the natural finesse of his own pipes, choking on vowels, howling and clucking his way through existential double-bummers like, "The good news, you cannot refuse / The bad news is there is no news," and sentimental moans like, "It was the journey of a life." Shine on, you crazy nihilist. (Drag City, PO Box 476867, Chicago, IL 60647) *Jeffrey Rotter*

Self
The Half-Bakad Serenade (Spongebath)

The Features
The Features EP (Spongebath)

Murfreesboro, Tennessee, is the birthplace of country music pioneer Uncle Dave Macon, the deathplace of Green Beret balladeer Sgt. Barry Sadler, and the home base of Spongebath Records, which has an odd knack for stumbling upon stubbornly herky-jerky 1980-vintage new wave, 17 years later. The label even has its very own Cars and early Police (unreleased Florida pogo trio the C-60's).

The former are the Features, five innocents hailing from up the road



apiece in even tinier Sparta, Tennessee, which could probably beat Athens, Georgia, in a new wave war if need be. As mid-'90s Cars surrogates go, they've got more nuclear boots and better rickety organ hooks than the Rentals, Pulsars, Bobgoblin, you name it. They sadly leave their indelibly fey demo-tape wonder "Your Smile"—concerning a girl wearing the singer's shirt—off their debut EP, substituting a pretty march called "Button My Shirt." Live, the Features often feature matching shirts (ties too), but not suede ones, though their "Armani Suede" has a Stone Temple Pilots glam riff, and singer Matt Pelham effortlessly turning his sweet'n'wussy falsetto into a hard grunge grunt. Later, in a whine too white for Weezer, he pretends "I'm the funkiest brutha you've ever seen / Step to the left, step to the right, whoah... dy-no-mite!"

The Features' labelmates Self, of 1996 alt-rock hit "So Low" fame, have their own faux-urban propensities on *The Half-Bakad Serenade*. Literally all by his self (the rest of his Nine-Inch-Nails-as-nice-guys quintet sits this one out), home-studio jockey Matt Mahaffey concentrates on attaching miniature melodies to preprogrammed old-school beatbox boings, usually with twinkly orchestral slivers sticking out. There's an across-the-room blankness to Mahaffey's singtalk, sometimes intentionally ("Everyone today is a drug-crazed maniac / Blah blah / Blah blah"). But that doesn't stop two crazed teen-stalker babes, retrieved from his voice-mail, from leaving a between-song message



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begging to service him.

Matt namedrops Rob Base and MC Shan, dinks out a digital-funked sequel to Prince's "Privete Joy," raps about bald bass players, pleys hide-and-seek in his preschool rec room, hides insomniac New Romantic robots underground, and goes "trick-or-treatin' dressed up like Marilyn Manson." At one point, he decides he's gotta skip town (Murfreesboro?), so he jumps off a building sporting "cinderblocks for shoes." From his rhythm, you'd almost think he was wearing Filas. (Spongebath, 101 N. Maple St., Murfreesboro, TN 37130)

Chuck Eddy

5 Ornette Coleman + Joachim Kühn

Colors (Verve/Harmolodic)

8 Ornette Coleman

In All Languages (Verve/Harmolodic)

Back in the day, Ornette Coleman and his plastic alto sax revolutioned jazz, but not with the righteous radicalism or caterwauling catharsis of his fellow free thinkers—John Coltrane, Cecil Taylor, Albert Ayler. Instead, Coleman and his late '50s–early '60s quartets created a more natural, deeply melodic musical language, dubbed "hermolodics." In the process, they cut some of the best jazz records ever made.

Although Coleman's acoustic, small-group outings have always shined, his forays into electric, orchestral, and multimedia settings have been checkered, at best, often hamstrung by the same idiosyncrasies that make his best work so good. Harmolodics, it seems, is a language spoken eloquently only by select company. For evidence, you didn't need to suffer through Coleman's recent impromptu supergroup debacle with Lou Reed and Laurie Anderson at Lincoln Center. *Colors*, a live set of duets with German pianist Joachim Kühn, effectively proves the point.



While pairing the loquacious Texan with the sometimes turgid Teuton doesn't set German-American relations back to the Summer of '42, you also don't hear many echoes of the Berlin Wall crumbling, either. Kühn competently complements Coleman's keening flights of fancy, and the master's new compositions (penned exclusively for this date), hold their own. But the pianist's full-figured filigrees clog too many of the pipes end tunnels through which Coleman's creetive juices normally flow, causing sonic blockage that only a hermolodic high-colonic could cure.

Verve's reissue of *In All Languages* is a much more high-fiber effair. Intended to show the full sweep of Coleman's concept, this 1987 outing features a reunited quartet—the late Don Cherry on pocket trumpet (joke amongst yourselves), Charlie Haden on bass, Billy Higgins on drums—as well as Coleman's electric band Prime Time, a ramshackle assemblage featuring son Denardo on drums. Though the latter group is given to occasional brilliance, its off-kilter funk too often degenerates into busybody abstraction, sounding less Prime Time than late-night cable access. Even though Coleman himself almost always inspires, the Prime Time package, like *Colors*, shows that harmolodics is sometimes untranslatable.

The quartet, however, shares a preternatural telepathy, exuding agility and sharp focus. Haden's limber, countrified bass echoes and embellishes Colemen's melodies with protean grace, while laying a rhythmic foundation so supple you'd suspect he'd greesed the thing with Oil of Olay. The globe-trotting Cherry sounds right at home, his whimsical, sprightly eruptions adorning the leader's lines. Even if Coleman can't quite teach new dogs his old tricks, at least the old dogs sound as good as new.

Rob Michaels

8 The Herbaliser

Blow Your Headphones (Ninja Tune)

If you're a multicultist dying for an opportunity to flip the primitivist script, try the Herbaliser's *Blow Your Headphones* as a jumping-off point. To wit: Brits Ollie Teebe and Jeke Wherry make restless, joyously



indulgent abstract hip-hop because, frankly, they don't know any better. Seriously—indecipherable samples, rolling rare beats, detective-flick horns, and violin loops? They must not know how things are done in the big leagues, bless their nobly savage hearts. Someone get these gentlemen some '80s R&B compilations, please.

The Herbs have way too many ideas to wait around for a context. From the bionic Elvin Jones rhythms underpinning "Mr. Chombee Has the Flaw" to the dub ooze of "A Mother (for Your Mind)" and the insinuating electro-clave of "Ginger Jumps the Fence," they just want to show you how many different ways your spine can jerk. Things get even more interesting when rapper What What (Tsidi Ibrahim from Natural Resource) joins up. While she takes a few gratuitous shots at Big Willie–isms on the goofy, spoken-word "Hardcore," it's her flow and wordplay—darting and bobbing like Pernell Whitaker at his cat-and-mouse best—that spark "The Blend," "Bring It," and "New + Improvèd." Her lines weave through rhythmic labyrinths with a slyness that betrays her jazz heritage (her father is pianist Abdullah Ibrahim, a.k.a. Dollar Brand). With beats for beats' sake and lyrics for pure mindfuck, *Blow Your Headphones* is such a straight-up challenging album because it doesn't know that it's not supposed to be. (Ninja Tune, 1751 Richardson, Suite 6109, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3K 1G6) *Tony Green*

7 Reservoir

Pink Machine (Zero Hour)

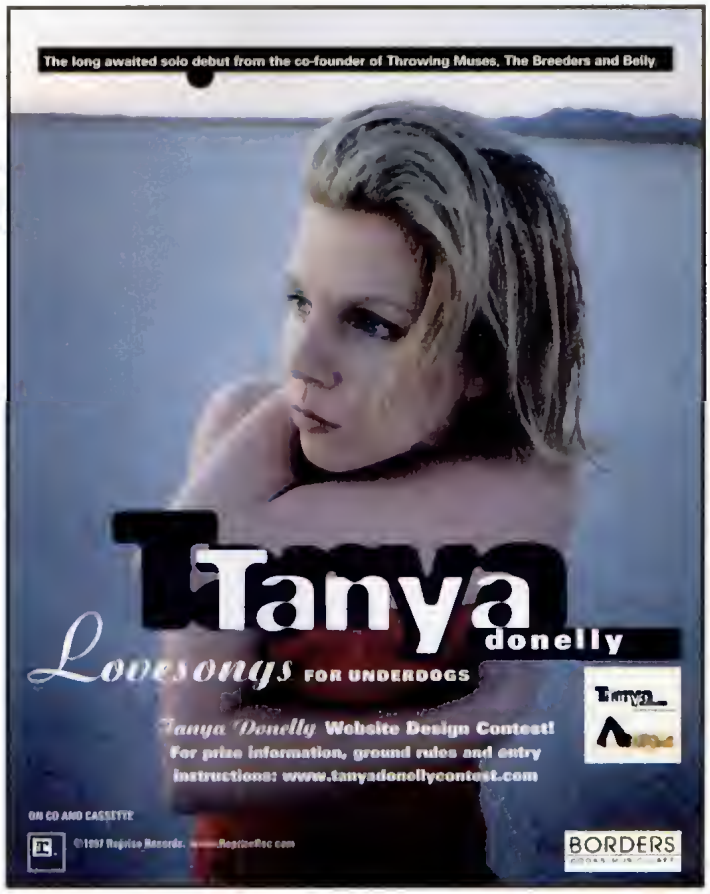
As a member of Space Needle, drummer Jud Ehrbar has flown the prog-rock flag as proudly (and insanely) as General Patton saluting the Stars and Stripes. Conducting excessive synthesizer experiments that bent the time/space continuum toward the year 2112, Space Needle even enlisted legendary Yes cover artist Roger Dean for a pterodactyl-over-the-sea-of-tranquility album motif. At times, Ehrbar has seemed almost ashamed of his melodic gift, cloaking pretty, gentle-voiced songs in weathered tranch coats of four-track noise, or burying them in 13-minute feedback freakouts.

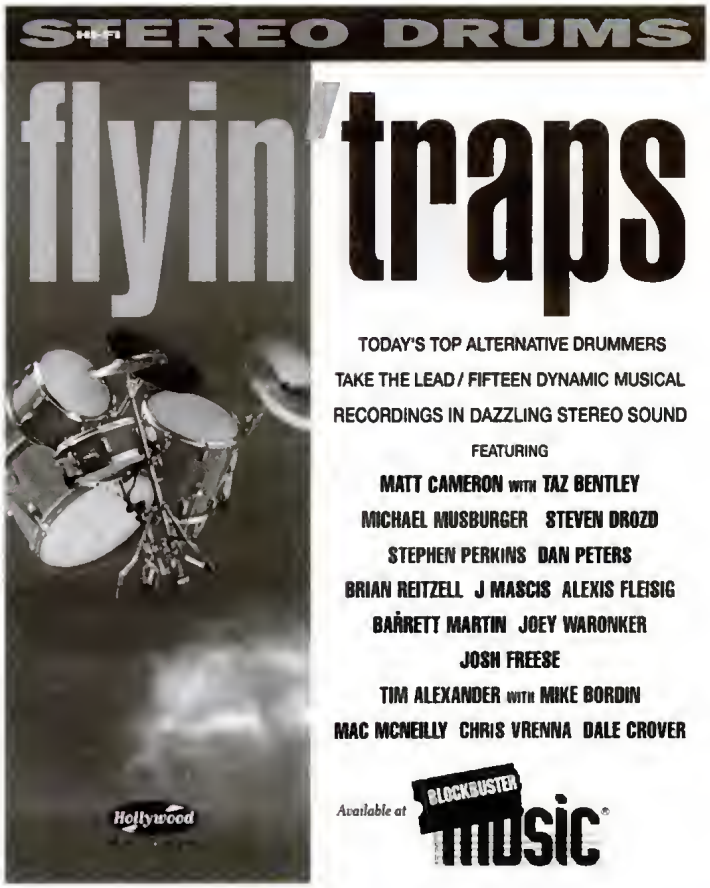
On *Pink Machine*—the second release from his one-man band, Reservoir, he admits "Something's wrong / When you hear the sound but you don't hear the song." It's like that scene from an ABC *After School Special* when the tough kid in a denim jacket brushes the greasy bangs away from his face and lets the caring teacher see the tear in his eye. He's letting us in. It's emotional, man, *seriously*. On the title track, over a slow, echoing electric guitar, Ehrbar sings like he's alone at the edge of a cliff, a loser who came to jump but somehow found hope in the expansive view. "So if you see me tonight / Come back and hold me tight," he nearly whispers. "Pink Machine" may be one of the saddest, most beautiful

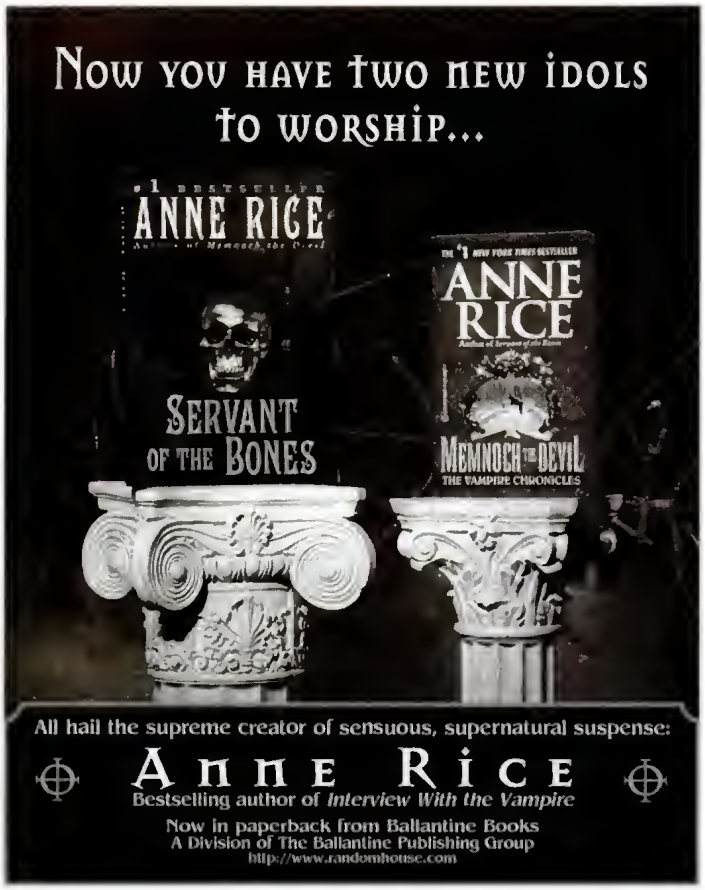


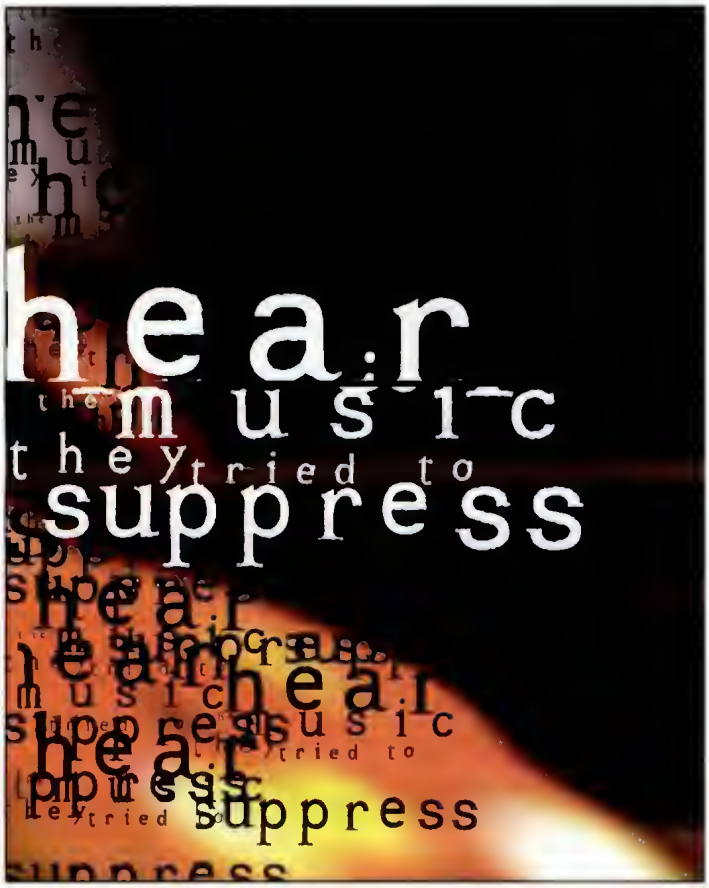
songs you'll hear all year. A decade ago, during a particularly inspired stupor, Paul Westerberg might've rasped it himself.

Though the album emphasizes Ehrbar's skewed taste for '70s radio fare (he covered Paul Simon's "American Tune" and Genesis's "Back in NYC" on a racent 7-inch), his prog monster still creeps out of the closet. Amid sparse songs like "Weight of the World," Korg solos take wing as gracefully as a flock of seagulls off an empty beach. You just know a faux-velvet poster hangs on the wood-paneled wall of Ehrbar's Long Island basement—glowing eerie and fantastic in the black light. (Zero Hour, 14 West 23rd Street, 4th Floor, New York, NY 10010) *David Bry*









Heavy Rotation

A recap of the past few months' most notable releases.

Cornershop *When I Was Born for the 7th Time* (Luaka Bop/Warner Bros.)

As a British citizen with genes from the Punjab, Cornershop's Tjinder Singh grew up a hopeless hybrid, a "Western Oriental," as he sang on the group's last album. That's what racial difference is for Singh: fun and clash. *When I Was Born* shows Singh finally crafting an album that reflects the strength of his confusions, turning away from the ragged indie rock that dominated Cornershop's previous music, and letting the groove be his guide. *(Davis)*

Ani DiFranco *Living in Clip* (Righteous Babe)

The double-live *Living in Clip* is not only the culmination of DiFranco's seven years running her label Righteous Babe, it also feels like something of a coming-out party, practically exalting the twentysomething iconoclast as libidinous prophet of the New Flesh. The object of all the adoring screams on *Living in Clip* isn't self-righteous, though; just forthright in a way we haven't heard since Joni Mitchell was a staple on American pop charts. *(Cooper)*

Geraldine Fibbers *Butch* (Virgin)

If country music tends to bottle up hurt and resentment, the bravest punk knows one thing: Sometimes, hate heals. And on *Butch*, the Geraldine Fibbers' second LP, vocalist Carla Bozulich remains a punk even in her folksiest flirtations. You get the feeling she swigs country whiskey for the express purpose of turning it into punk piss. *(Vowell)*

Hanson *Middle of Nowhere* (Mercury)

This late in the century, most of us are at home with alienation; it's *happiness* that's alienating, which is why Hanson come off so wonderfully, outer-space weird. The Okie brothers—impossibly cute, talented, and blond—sing so far off in the stratospheres of joy that no one's convinced they're exactly human. Apocalypse is overrated, anyway: I wanna be abducted. *(Vowell)*

Wyclef Jean *Presents the Carnival Featuring Refugee Allstars* (Ruffhouse/Columbia)

Tapping the annual Caribbean "Carnival" as a metaphor for black possibility (it's where "anything can happen"), Fugee Wyclef's first solo album is a sprawling, brown-sound shout-out that strives to be a multicultural manifesto: Radio Free Wyclef as black star line to the 21st century. A savvy raptivist, Wyclef's reaching for both pop superstardom *and* rebel cred. It's hard to tell if that will be his downfall or his biggest asset. *(Michel)*

Yoko Ono/Plastic Ono Band *Yoko Ono/Plastic Ono Band* (Rykodisc)

From 1970, backed by John Lennon, Ringo Starr, and Klaus Voormann (except for one track with the Ornatta Coleman Quartet), Ono and her chattering, glottal vocalese prove to be a powerful engine for moving non-weird rock grooves into plains of extreme otherness. What Ringo was making of all this while he stoically pattered away is anyone's guess. *(Coley)*

Lee Perry *Arkology* (Island)

Seventies reggae can be all things to all people. To hippies, it's ganja and unfortunate haberdashery. To punks, it's roughneck posturing and renegade politics. To R&B smoothies, it's lilting lovers rock. And to post-rockers, it's low-fi techno-robics. With the release of *Arkology*—a funky, fearless three-CD collection of Perry's productions from his Black Ark Studios—each camp has reason to, respectively, a) play Hacky Sack; b) sneer and skank; c) put some Riunita on ice (so nice); and d) remix another Tortoise track. *(Michaels)*

Primal Scream *Vanishing Point* (Reprise)

Primal Scream's Bobby Gillespia has always believed in the ecstasies of rhythm, but their more recent offerings downshifted into classic rock and its roots, satisfying few except the young, international shaggies who dug whatever they did. This year's Primal Scream, though, ease everything—dance beats and guitar crunches, Memphis memories and Abbey Road scorings, the raw and the refined—into one supremely nuanced and uncannily sustained racket. *(Hunter)*

Prodigy *The Fat of the Land* (Maverick)

If the Chemical Brothers impress with clever twists, DJ/producer Liam Howlett's beats are clubbish in the caveman sense—you can hear a whoosh before the blow arrives. The only drawbacks are verbal: "Funky Shit" is too empty a slogan even for this band, and "Smack My Bitch Up" isn't party language at all. Are Prodigy meant to please an imagined U.S. mass that finds synths wimpy but will rock along anyway if given some misogyny to suck on? *(Weisbard)*

Radiohead *OK Computer* (Capitol)

OK Computer has no obvious single, the lyrics don't make immediate sense, most of the tracks are too weird for radio, and the whole thing sounds like nothing that sells. Yet this U.K. quintet's audacious sonic sprawl is the most appealingly odd effort by a name rock band in ages, a DIY electronica album made with guitars. The result isn't political, and only vaguely social; but it feels utterly contemporary. *(Walters)*

Various Artists *Return of the D.J. Vol. II* (Bomb)

Now that the ear-catching mastery of San Francisco's Invisibl Skratch Piklz has prompted DreamWorks to release an instrumental version of last year's art-hop bombshell *Dr. Octagon*, the time may be right for this turntablist showcase. And these musicians—Pepe Deluxe, Kid Koala, Mr. Dibbs, more—do bring something genuinely new to the brave new world of electronica: chops, muscle, and straight-up Van-Halen-on-the-wheels-of-steel pyrotechnics. *(Norris)*

Wu-Tang Clan *Wu-Tang Forever* (Loud/RCA)

Why buy an album that's obviously too long, too expensive, and half of which could be lost forever with no harm done? Because it's the Wu, and for all the *Pocahontas* tie-in hype surrounding the group, you still get a dizzying number of dense, Möbius-strip rhymes. So this roast has a fatty side and takes a while to cook. You want brevity and classique form, buy the Wallflowers. *(Frere-Jones)*

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Radiohead

The Warfield Theatre, San Francisco
July 27, 1997

Radiohead singer Thom Yorke doesn't immediately strike you as so very special. He seems diffident, just a dash of the eccentric, in the way only Brits can—a slightly elfin accountant, maybe. "I'm on a roll," he sang on the opening "Lucky" at San Francisco's Warfield Theatre, but hesitantly, as if he hoped saying it would make it so. When he thanked the audience toward the end of the show—"You've been very lovely"—he sounded entirely sincere. Yet Yorke's voice, capable of everything from seraphic croons to anguished moans, seemingly issues from outside himself, jerking his wiry body about as if transported by energies not of his own manufacture. But even as he writhes and twists onstage, Yorke maintains a very British reserve; pouring out his meditations on aloneness, he remains solitary, as if the sociability of live performance is personally impermissible.

Playing to a sold-out crowd thick with cardigans and soccer jerseys, Radiohead was a study in contrasts. The band created painterly textures, edging chiming psychedelic notes with white-noise squeals and gargantuan Hendrix riffs with chunky whine-raps. Their big power chords simultaneously aggressive and self-effacing, Radiohead rocked out theoretically, testing and severing their leader's terrors before airing them—and if you think that's an insult, you don't understand how much beauty pure mathematics can hold. Though there were a few too many closing rave-ups, as if they didn't trust that their message would go down without a spoonful of adrenalina, Radiohead found a ruminative groove for most of their performance: privacy as public statement.

Booming the Orwellian productivity=death spoken-word track "Fitter, Happier" before taking the stage, Radiohead pointedly ignored "Creep" and brought a pained intelligence to songs from the alternately droll and desperate *OK Computer*. "Electioneering" was restarted one verse in, biting all the harder into its say-anything sarcasm; the dryly threatening "Karma Police" built into a closing feedback solo that ended mid-squeal; "Paranoid Android" slid from delicacy to brutal noise before stopping on a dime. And by the time Yorke sang "They'd shut me away / But I'd be all right" on the final encore, "Subterranean Homesick Alien," it was hard to disagree. Yorke knows that it's a cold world out there, and sometimes it's best to stay inside your head. *Jesse Berrett*



Paranoid Android: Radiohead's Thom Yorke

JOHN POPPLETELL


Andrea Echeverry of Aterciopelados

Rockinvasión '97

Beacon Theatre, New York City
June 30, 1997

"There's too much blood spilled in the city!" howled rubber-limbed Roco of Meldita Vecindad [the Damned Neighborhood], the ska-punk champions of Mexico City's proletarian hardcore scene. As Roco's gruff Spanish reverbereted through Menhettan's ornete Beacon Theatre, the band climaxed "Un Poco de Sengre" ("A Little Bit of Blood"), the Maldita favorite about a young squeegee guy who gets run down by e speeding car. In Mexico City, where kids dress as snake chermers, organ grinders, and circus clowns to beg et intersections, this song is es reel es, say, e Notorious B.I.G. throwdown. But for the growing Alterlatino ermy—e diverse, under-25 crew of recently arrived immigrants, second-generation Latinos, end curious onlookers—Maldita's hyperkinetic flurry of scatting guitar, mariachi horns, end Afro-Caribbean percussion signaled a mad rush for moshing position up front.

This summer's eight-date Rockinvasión '97 is the most ambitious *rock en español* tour to ever hit the U.S., uniting four bands—Maldita, Colombia's Aterciopelados [the Velvets], Argentina's Fabulosos Cadillacs, and Spain's La Unión—two major labels (BMG and Werner) end, er, Pepsi, to spread the Latin Alternative gospel. After a few years of earnest rumblings, *rock en español* may finelly be reedy to cross over, thanks, in pert, to its embrace of the international ska revival. Bilinguel bands like Lueka Bop's King Chengó end Epitaph's Voodoo Glow Skulls are charting on college radio, the DGC-produced *Star Maps* soundtrack features Latin up-and-comers from L.A. and South America, end Geffen is eggresively signing more Latin acts. Most important, though, the demogrephics ere there—approximately half of the U.S. Latino population is under 25, end *rock en español* appeals to a new counterculture weaned on Nirvana but looking for e way to recapture lost roots.

"There's three rats for every person in Bogotá—we hope we brought enough for you," said Aterciopelados vocalist Andrea Echeverry es she showered the crowd with rubber rodents. Clad in Day-Glo green end pink plaid, her short black hair streaked with red, Echeverry declared herself e "difficult chick, but worth it," and wielded sweetly cynical tunes urging macho suitors to back off. Not only is Echeverry a punky antidote to the suburben blandness of the Lilith Fair crew, her band bursts with rhythmic and melodic innovation, fusing dub, flamenco, hardcore, salsa-rock, and two-step country beats. Headliners Los Fabulosos Cadillacs were a bit of a disappointment, though. Inexplicably, they held back on the ska-salsa of international hits like "Matador" and "Mal Bicho" until the encore, when Meldita's Roco joined the group for e fiercely percussive rendition of the Maytals' "Monkey Man." Such transcendent moments made it clear that aiternarock's not really dead, it just needs a shot of new blood from time to time. *Ed Morales*

JOSEPH RODRIGUEZ

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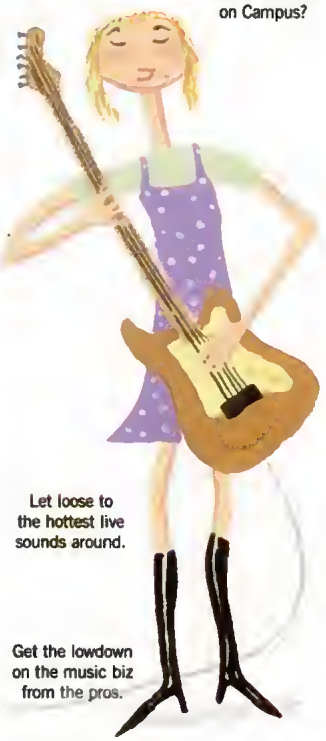
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BLONDE ON BLONDE

continued from page 95

near Phoenix, so I could be close to them. Otherwise, I would have never gone to see my parents during those years; the cocaine years. I was too nerved out to sit and talk to my mom and dad; they were the last people that I would talk to.

So, talk to me about "Gold Dust Woman." What's it about?

Well, the gold dust refers to cocaine, but it's not completely about that, because there wasn't that much cocaine around then. Everybody was doing a little bit—you know, we never bought it or anything, it was just around—and I think I had a real serious flash of what this stuff could be, of what it could do to you. The whole thing about how we all love the ritual of it, the little bottle, the little diamond-studded spoons, the fabulous velvet bags. For me, it fit right into the incense and candles and that stuff. And I really imagined that it could overtake everything, never thinking in a million years that it would overtake me. I must have met a couple of people that I thought did too much coke, and I must heve been impressed by that. Because I made it into a whole story.

But it seems more like a sexual identity song or a romantic identity song. There's some amazing lines in the song. Like, "Rulers make bad lovers / You better put your kingdom up for sale."

I was definitely swept away by how big Fleetwood Mac was and how famous I suddenly was. Me, who couldn't buy anything before, could now go in any store and buy anything I wanted. And I wondered what that would do to me on down the line. I might be a ruler, but maybe I'd be a lousy lover.

I love the imagery in the song, when she's a dragon, and a black widow.

That just means an anger. The black widow, the dregon thing, is all about being scary and angry.

But I think it's more powerful than that. A dragon is the most potent and virile symbol you can use. So applying that to a woman, or to yourself, or to an archetypal alter-ego self is like this power, especially if you wrote it when you were frail and frightened and maybe not as powerful as you became later.

You know what, Courtney? I don't really know what "Gold Dust Woman" is about. I know there was cocaina there and that I fancied it gold dust, somehow. I'm going to have to go back to my journals and see if I can pull something out about "Gold Dust Woman." Because I don't really know. It's weird that I'm not quite sure. It *can't* be *all* about cocaina.

No, I think you're bigger than that. ●

WHERE TO BUY

Page 128: Paul Smith suit, $1,300, at Paul Smith, New York City; Neiman Marcus, nationwide; Bergdorf Goodman, New York City. Ozwald Boateng shirt, $398, Ozwald Boateng tie, $94, both at Saks Fifth Avenue, Los Angeles. Trussardi belt, $170, for store information call (212) 906-9133. Patrick Cox shoes, $340, at Patrick Cox, New York City; Gimme Shoes, San Francisco.

Page 129: Helmut Lang coat, $1,272, at Saks Fifth Avenue, select stores; Barneys, New York City. Ozwald Boateng shirt, $148, at Saks Fifth Avenue, Los Angeles. Cutler & Gross sunglasses, $130, at Gruen Optica, New York City. Zéro Halliburton attaché, $500, at Bergdorf Goodman, New York City.

Page 130: Giorgio Armani shirt, $250, Giorgio Armani pants, $360, Giorgio Armani shoes, $335, all at Giorgio Armani, nationwide.

Page 131: (Her): Prada dress, $2,700, Prada slipdress, $550, both at Prada, New York City and Costa Mesa, California; Jeffreys, Atlanta. (Him): Antonio Miro suit, $290, at Louis, Boston. Paul Smith tie, $90, at Paul Smith, New York City; Neiman Marcus, nationwide; Bergdorf Goodman, New York City.

Page 132: Ozwald Boateng suit, $1,248, Ozwald Boateng shirt, $398, all at Saks Fifth Avenue, Los Angeles. Trussardi belt, $170, for store information call (212) 906-9133.

Page 133: Turnbull & Asser shirt, $185, at Bergdorf Goodman, New York City; Neiman Marcus, nationwide. Baldessarini Hugo Boss vest (from a three-piece suit, $1,098), at Boss Hugo Boss, nationwide; Bergdorf Goodman, New York City.

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the music page

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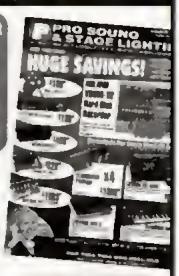
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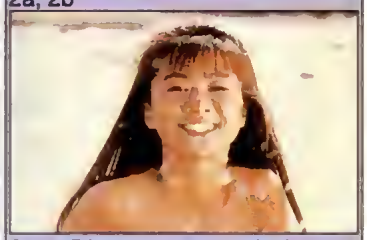
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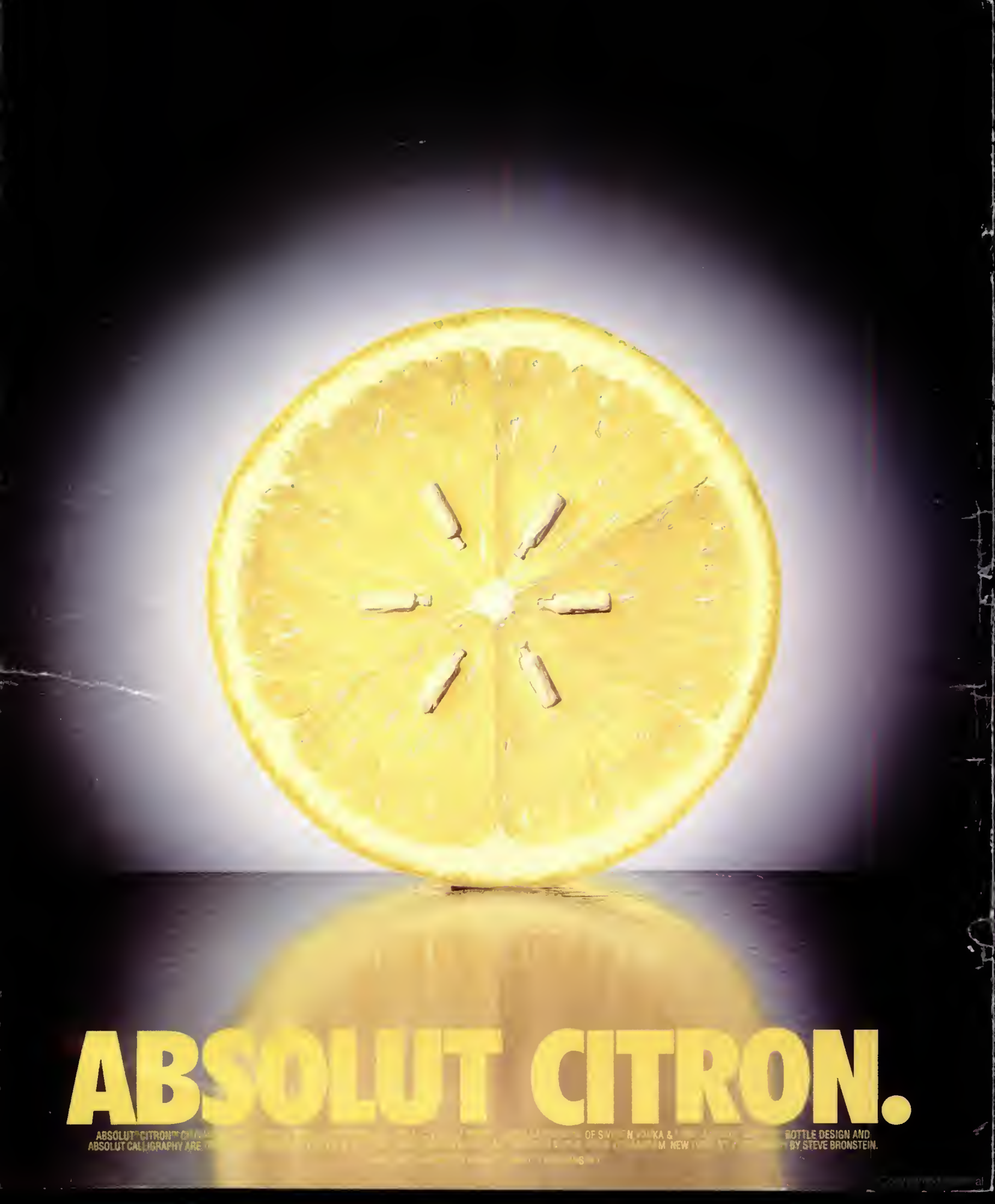
#17 "CLASSIC SCHLOCK" I WISH I COULD JUST SPREAD MY WINGS AND FLY, FLY AWAY, THROUGH YEARS OF LIGHT AND FUTURE PAST, AND SAIL AWAY TO WHERE I'M GOING THROUGH CELESTIAL WAYS ON A HORSE WITH NO NAME. I'D BE A SPACEMAN, FLYING LIKE AN EAGLE TO THE SEA, LETTING MY SPIRIT CARRY ME, FREE AS A BIRD THAT WILL NEVER CHANGE. I'D LISTEN TO THE WIND BLOW AND WATCH THE SUN RISE. WILD HORSES COULDN'T DRAG ME AWAY BECAUSE I'VE GOT SO MUCH TO SAY AND SO LITTLE TIME, AND TIME KEEPS ON SLIPPING INTO THE FUTURE. BUT I WON'T GET FOOLED AGAIN BECAUSE I'M SAILING AWAY TO A DISTANT PORT DEEP INSIDE OF ME. YOU DO FEEL LIKE I DO DON'T YOU? IT'S MORE THAN A FEELING IS'NT IT? IT FEELS LIKE THE FIRST TIME, PERHAPS LIKE IT'S NEVER FELT BEFORE AND NEVER WILL AGAIN, LIKE WHEN WE WERE CHAMPIONS OF THE WORLD, BACK WHEN WE COULD ROCK YOU AND THEN GO OUR OWN WAY. WHEN ON A DARK DESSERT HIGHWAY, WITH COOL WIND IN OUR HAIR, WE WERE AS COLD AS ICE AND NOT WILLING TO SACRIFICE OR LOVE. THE LIGHTS WERE GOING DOWN ON THE CITY ON ACCOUNT OF THE FACT THAT THE WHEEL IN THE SKY KEPT ON TURNING BUT WE WERE STILL BACK OUT ON THE ROAD AGAIN TURNING THE PAGE, SMOKING A LITTLE HOOCHIE COO, CAN YOU DIG THAT LORDY MAMA! ON THE LAST DAY OF OUR JOURNEY IN OUR MASSERATI WHICH DID 185, WE REALIZED THAT WE WERE JUST SHOOTING STARS WHO COULDN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT TOMORROW BECAUSE YESTERDAY WAS GONE AND TUESDAY WAS GONE WITH THE WIND EVIDENTLY. WE DIDN'T WANT TO LET THE SUN GO DOWN ON US BECAUSE THAT WOULD BE THE POINT OF NO RETURN OF COURSE. THAT'S ABOUT WHEN MOTHER MARY SPOKE TO US. SHE FOUND US TO BE OLD MEN WANDERING LONLEY WITH SNOTS RUNNING DOWN OUR NOSES, SITTING ON A PARK BENCH EYEING LITTLE GIRLS WITH BAD INTENT. SHE CALLED US SKYLINE PIDGEONS AND TOLD US TO FLY, FLY AWAY TO THE SKY, FLY. BUT SADDLY WE REALIZE THAT WE ARE ALL JUST PRISONERS HERE OF OUR OWN DEVISE, AND I THINK THAT TONIGHT THERE'S GONNA BE A JAIL BREAK BUT EVEN THOUGH WE CAN CHECK OUT ANY TIME WE LIKE WE CAN NEVER LEAVE. EVEN THOUGH WE'VE PAY'D OUR DUES TIME AFTER TIME WE'VE DONE OUR SENTENCES BUT COMITED NO CRIMES. BAD MISTAKES, SURE WE MADE A FEW, BUT THIS IS NO TIME FOR LOSERS WE'LL KEEP ON FIGHTING TO THE END. I GUESS WE'RE ALL ON THIS SAME STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN, LITTERALLY JUST DUST IN THE WIND, BRICKS IN THE WALL IF YOU WILL. HEY YOU, IS THERE ANYBODY OUT THERE? SOMEBODY'S KNOCKING AT THE DOOR, SOMEBODY'S RINGING THE BELL OF MY CRACKER BOX PALACE. I'VE BEEN EXPECTING THEM BUT I'M JUST A NEW KID IN TOWN, A VICTUM OF LOVE, TIRED OF LIFE IN THE FAST LANE, I CAN'T HELP IT, I'M FEELING THAT WAY. WOAH.... WOAH.... WOAH.... LISTEN TO THE MUSIC. DARLIN, I HAVE GOT TO RAMBLE. JUDGING BY THE ROCKET IN MY POCKET IT'S TIME TO SQUEEZE MY LOMON AGAIN, 10 CC'S WORTH INTO A LOUIN SPOONFULL, IT'S ALL A PART OF MY ROCK-N-ROLL FANTASY, OH, AND HERE COME THE JESTERS NOW, 1, 2, AND 3.



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